MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL

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KILLRAVEN™

WARRIOR OF THE WORLDS

by DON McGREGOR and P. CRAIG RUSSELL

Prologue:

It became known as the One Night War.

The rest of the resistance was simply slow capitulation and subjugation.

The Martians came out of the night skies on June 29, 2001. They came without warning, turning the summer darkness bright, blinding any view of the stars. They came with machines of destruction.

By morning, weapon stockpiles across the globe had been obliterated, without a single Terran nuclear device having been fired. The Martians believed in "clean" death, one that affected victims and not environment.

They tried to kill as few humans as possible during the initial assault, since humans were considered an epicurean delight, a tasty delicacy for banquet occasions. They did not desire indiscriminate carnage; rather they preferred their meals prepared properly, with the right seasoning.

They used some humans for other purposes. During the initial chaos that occurs as part of the process of taking over a planet and changing the status quo, they confined much of the scientific community, gave them the title of Keepers, and had them perform laboratory experiments on their less fortunate brethren.

Some humans were turned into hunters, with the appropriate title, Exterminators, given to their function. Conquest seemed complete.

Until years after the conquest, a rebellion began, a small force that came to be known as The Freemen. It was a groundswell movement, looking for a leader.

And eventually, it found one.

Martian Chronology Record

GLADIATORIAL TITLE: KILLRAVEN
TERRAN NOMENCLATURE: JONATHAN RAVEN
HUMAN SUBDIVISION: CAUCASIAN
Mother: MAUREEN RAVEN... executed at site of their capture.
Father: Unknown factor. Presumably killed during first five years of Second-Wave Assault by Martian forces.
HUMAN TRANSPIRANCE (In accordance with Earth Chronology Concepts)
2006: Killraven, approximately six Earth years of age, captured by human recruiting force under the leadership of DR.RAKER. Professional Exterminator, SAUNDERS, accompanying.
2008: Killraven exhibits rebellious tendencies. Harsh disciplinary measures have little effect. Subject exhibits first leadership abilities in gladiatorial pens. Attempt at escape terminated, placed under KEEPER WHITMAN for rehabilitation and observation. (See Keeper Whitman's tutelage.)
2010: First meeting with Earth Subject, M'SHULLA, in the gladiatorial pens. (Ref. GLADIATORIAL PROFILES, June 15, 2010.)
2014: Subject Killraven meets gladiator BALD EAGLE, nicknames him Old Skull. Subjects fight together for first time in arena at Madison Square Garden, defeat Gladiator WARR. (Ref. GLADIATORIAL PROFILES, Aug. 3, 2014.)
Killraven engenders escape from Gladiatorial Institute, takes Bald Eagle with him.
2016: Migrated to Staten Island. Formed first group of Freemen. Reestablished contact with before mentioned gladiatorial alumni, M'Shulla.
2018: Destroys Yankee Stadium Experimental Laboratories. Recruits Keeper Carmilla Frost to band.
2019: Subject Killraven escapes televised death over Mural Phonics System, learns brother still alive. Begins trek toward Yellowstone Mercenary Sector.
Subject destroys Cyborg Emissary, Skar, in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

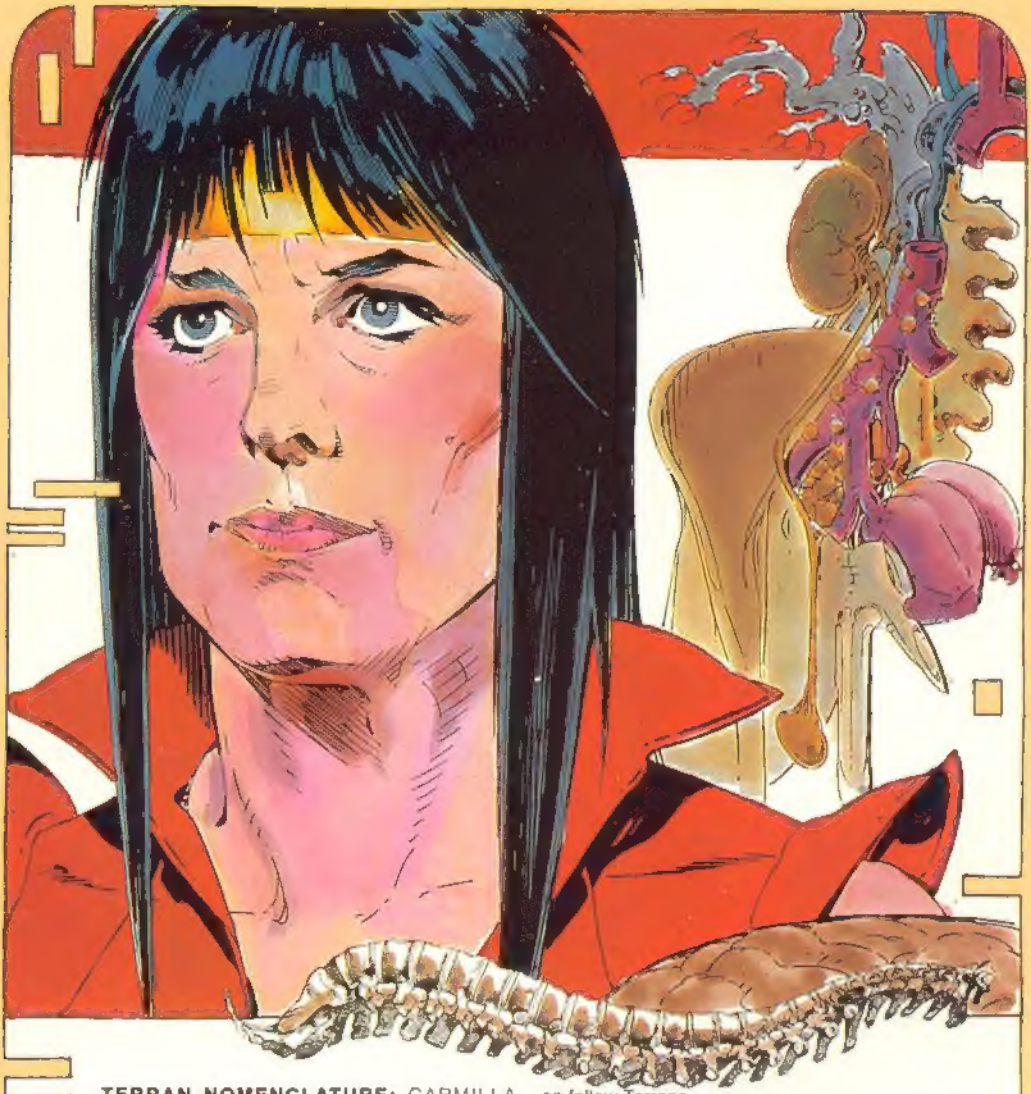
Martian Chronology Record

GLADIATORIAL TITLE: BLOODARROW
TERRAN NOMENCLATURE: M'SHULLA SCOTT
HUMAN SUBDIVISION: NEGROID
HUMAN TRANSPIRANCE (In accordance with Earth Chronology Concepts)
1997: GENESIS OF ORGANISM.
1998: Father DORIAN SCOTT, supervisor and investor in multi-million dollar (Terran bartering papers) project named Harlem Tri-Rain Express, faced social disaster re: Earth economic structure, when newer constructions superseded Express. (Ref. Transbelt Conveyor Apparatus. Usages before Martian Demobilization.)
1999: Father separated from family due to inability to contribute worthwhile functions to human society, sent to Rehabilitation Motivation Center (A Martian version of said institution refined and operating efficiently in Terran sector, Hawaii.)
2002: Mother HORTENSE SCOTT organized first civilian resistance movement against Martian Invasion Force. Movement titled Fighters for Human Dignity. Son M'Shulla now 5 years old.
2005: Fighters for Human Dignity routed and M'Shulla brought to gladiatorial pens. Despite background and subsequent training with crossbow (Extremely proficient, see GLADIATORIAL PROFILES, subdivision Shattered Plexiglass, June 1, 2011.) subject M'Shulla retained unbreakable example of Terran humor.
2010: First meeting with earth subject, KILLRAVEN, in the Gladiatorial Pens. (Ref. GLADIATORIAL PROFILES, June 15, 2010.)
2012: Subject moved to Coastal Base at Newport, RI, utilized as Security Personnel.
2015: Sabotage of Coastal Project and subsequent escape. Rejected gladiatorial title, Bloodarrow, upon escape, returned to Terran nomenclature. (Ref. Psychology of Terran Identity Obsessions.)

Martian Chronology Record

GLADIATORIAL TITLE: BALD EAGLE
TERRAN NOMENCLATURE: OLD SKULL
HUMAN SUBDIVISION: CAUCASIAN
HUMAN TRANSPIRANCE (In accordance with Earth Chronology Concepts)
1987: GENESIS OF ORGANISM. Parents: Unknown.
2001: Subject captured during initial assault of Terran Transportation systems. (Ref. Transparent Tramway, Routes and Construction.)
2002: Utilized as laborer during Construction of East Coast Primary Martian Complexes. Worked on conversion of existing Terran edifices into suitable Martian Bases.
2008: Ridiculed by fellow-Terran laborers for mental deficiency. Subject displays first proficiency at combat when crippled inmate suffers similar ridicule. (Ref. Elizabeth, New Jersey, Environmental Experimentation Laboratories for study of toxic air on Terrans.)
2010: Begins Gladiator Circuit. Wins Champion of Year at Hollywood Bowl Slaughter Pens.
2014: Meets Killraven at Madison Square Garden Arena. Killraven gives subject name of Old Skull. Subjects fight together for first time, defeat Gladiator WARR. (Ref. GLADIATORIAL PROFILES, Aug. 3, 2014.) Subject escapes with Killraven from Gladiatorial Institute.

Martian Chronology Record



TERRAN NOMENCLATURE: CARMILLA FROST
HUMAN SUBDIVISION: CAUCASIAN
HUMAN TRANSPIRANCE (In accordance with Earth Chronology Concepts)

1994: GENESIS OF ORGANISM.
Father: ANDRE FROST.
Mother: Unknown
2001: Subject Frost brought with father, Andre, to Yankee Stadium Genetic and Clonal Complex. Used as coercion in convincing father to perform cloning research.
2004: Begins helping father in laboratory experiments, displays natural affinity in field of Molecular Biology.
2010: Youngest human to receive Title of Keeper.
2014: Refuses to conduct cloning experiments on fellow Terrans.
2016: Parent organism slain by Martian Overlord 111, subject left with corpse. Subject informed that clonal process only method available to keep him alive. Subject agrees to begin experiment.
2017: Cloning of parent organism complete. Experiment unsuccessful due to cell deterioration after death. Mutated parent organism kept in Specimen Section to insure further cooperation by subject.
2018: Subject organizes escape of Killraven from Yankee Stadium Genetic and Clonal Complex. Joins Freemen. Parent organism, named Grok by subject, is also freed.
2019: Cyborg Exterminator Skar kills parent organism at Chattanooga, Tennessee. (Ref. Profile Record on Hawk the Slayer.)

Martian Elite Profile

THE HIGH OVERLORD

Documents not to be removed from COMPTRONICS DIVISION without AUTHORIZATION from WHITE HOUSE SELECT FORUM.

Achievement Record

1. Implemented Terran Scanners on twin moons of Mars, Phobos and Deimos.

2. Expert rider of S'phistan Desert Creatures—Thrice Conquerer of S'phistan Tournaments.

3. Member of Select Forum, presiding over Lava Chambers of Olympia Volcano Region.

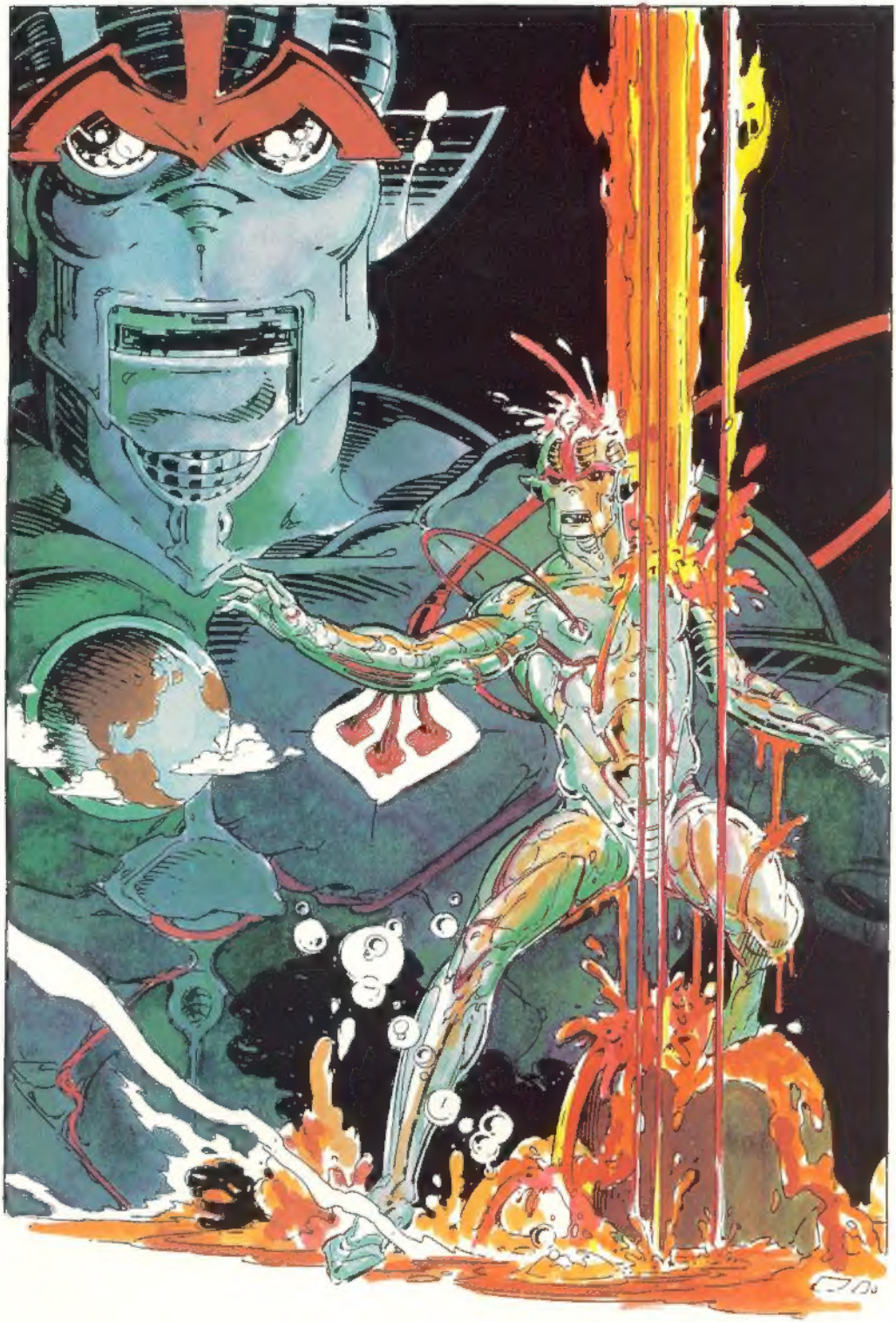
4. Decisive Select Forum Member in persuading council of feasibility of Second Invasion of Earth.

5. Primary force in continuing research in developing immunization program to Earth microbes.

6. Developed, in conjunction with other Select Forum members, strategy for second, successful assault.

7. Commander of initial assault forces against Earth, Attack II.

8. Received privilege of wearing first BioChemech armor, that counters Earth gravitational forces, and permits ease of movement. Strength is quadrupled. Armor offers maximum protection.



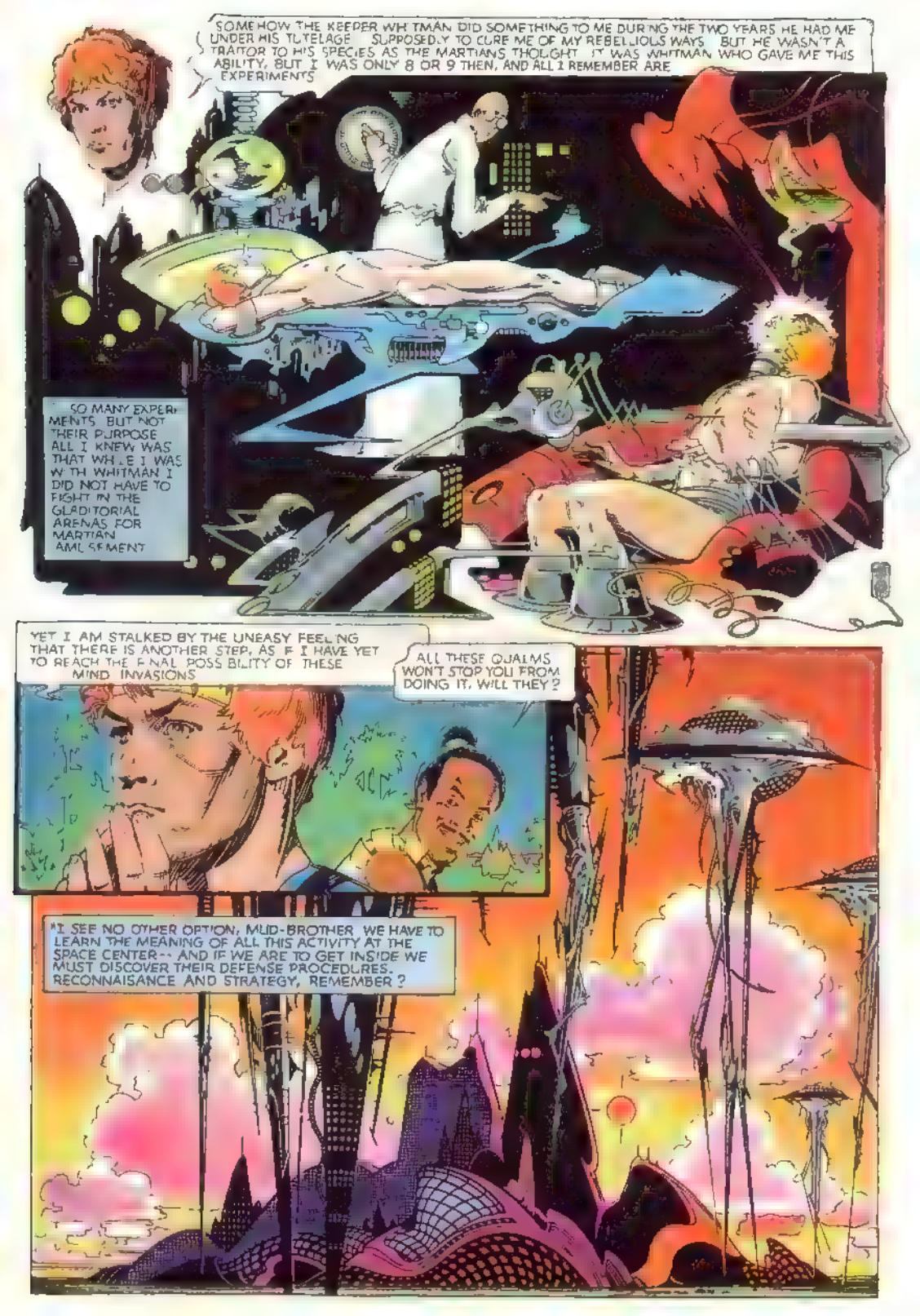
CAPE CANAVERAL, KENNEDY SPACE CENTER-- FEBRUARY, 2020
THE NIGHT IS SHATTERED, LIKE A BROKEN DREAM, BY THE ROAR OF MECHANICAL THUNDER AND A SUDDEN, BRILLIANT UNNATURAL DAWN. KILLRAVEN'S FACE IS LIT HARSHLY BY THE BEAUTIFUL BUT LETHAL APRICOT SPLASH OF FLAME AND GAS THAT ERUPTS FROM THE ROCKET'S EXHAUST.
HE WATCHES THE MARTIAN ROCKET RELEASED FROM EARTH, CLIMBING TOWARD ITS HOMEWORLD. ONE DAY, HIS EYES PROMISE, HE WILL BOARD SUCH A CRAFT AND WILL BRING THE WAR, DEVASTATION AND ATROCITY TO THE PLANET OF EARTH'S CONQUERORS--
--TO THE FOURTH PLANET, THE RED PLANET--
--TO MARS!
KILLRAVEN
"LAST DREAMS BROKEN"
OR13
PCR -82-

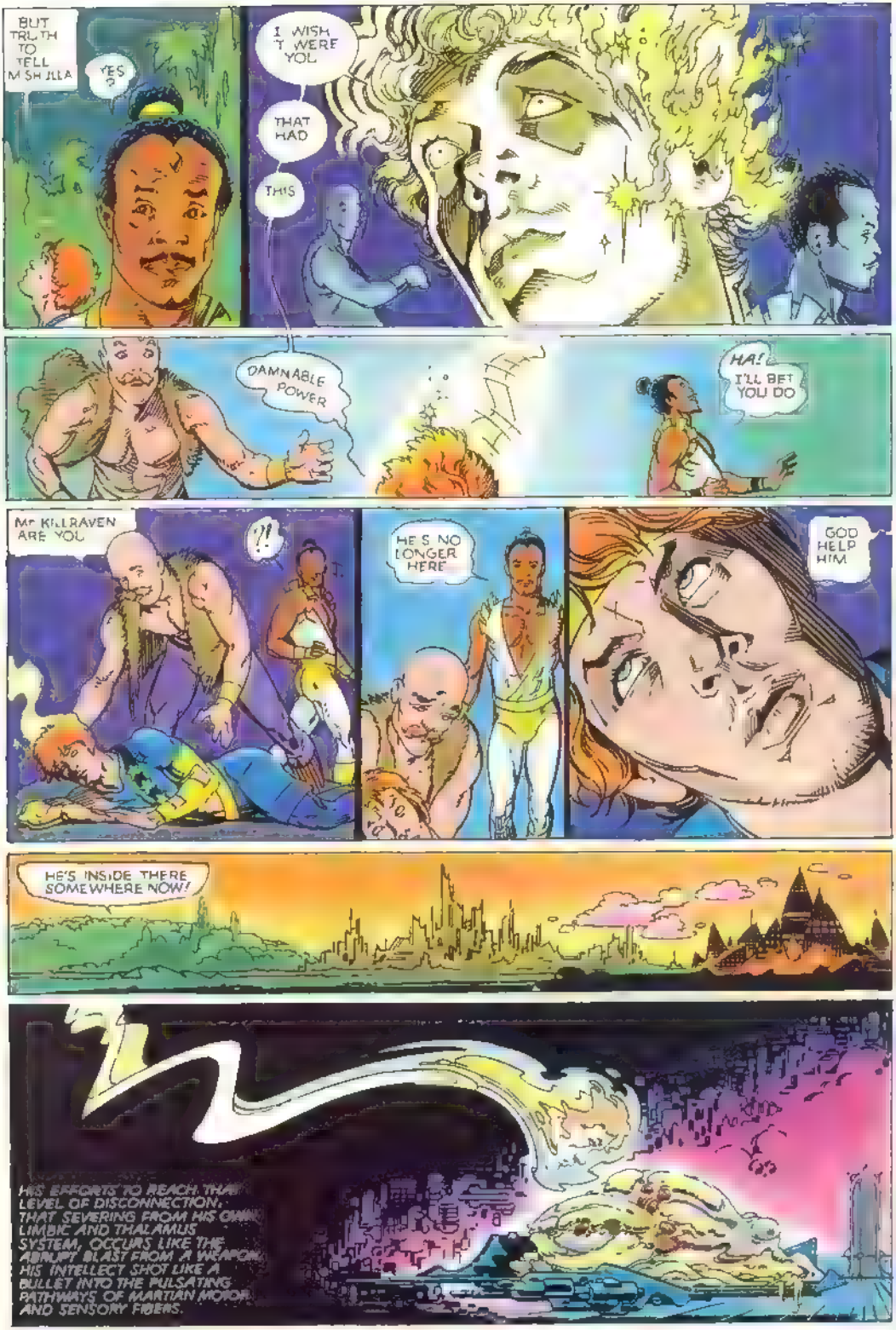
THE SKY TURNS A QUIETER UMBRA HUE, A LINGERING LEGACY OF THE LAUNCH
IN THE HUSHED, EARLY MORNING DARKNESS, THE SOUNDS OF LOVE MAKING ARE ETERNAL, AND UNMISTAKABLE. KILLRAVEN LISTENS FOR A MOMENT, THEIR WORDS CARRIED ON THE COOL WIND THAT LIFTS OFF THE ATLANTIC AND FLIRTS WITH SEA-GRASS. HE IS AT ONCE ASHAMED AND AROUSED
DON'T YOU EVER GET ENOUGH, M'SHULLA?
NOT OF YOU. NOT OF BEING WITH YOU. BUT I TRY TO BE QUIETER, CARM.
-- SOMEONE MIGHT HEAR US... OR SEE US.
YOU ALWAYS WERE .. SUCH A PRUDE, M'SHULLA, BUT THAT STILL
AHHH
FEELS
VERY GOOD
AN IMAGE OF VOLCANA ASH FLARES BEHIND KILLRAVEN'S EYES. HE RECALLS TOO MANY NIGHTS, SLEEPING ALONE. HE IMAGINES THEM MAKING LOVE. IT IS A LONELY FANTASY HE HAS HAD MANY TIMES

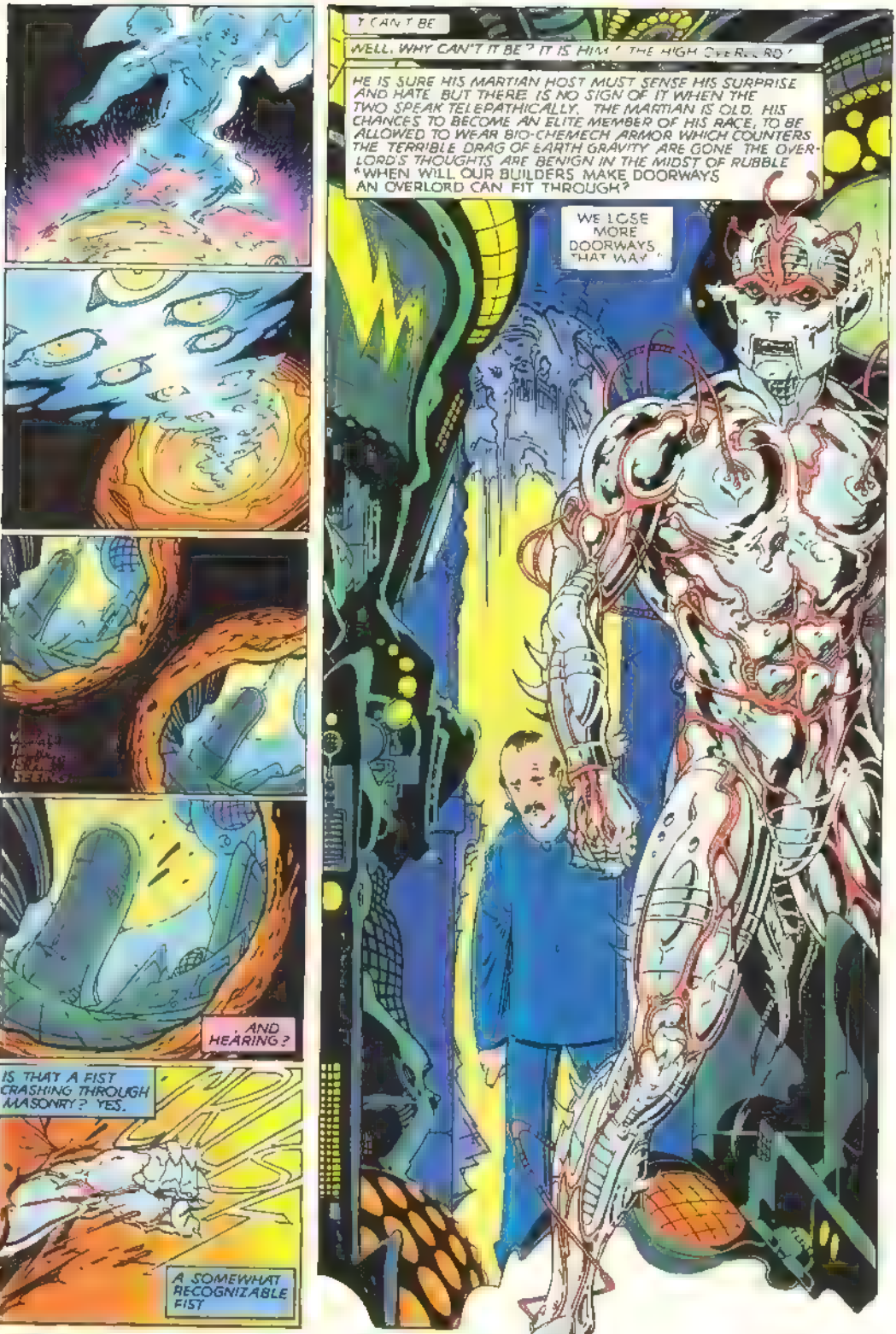
YOU OKAY, Mr KILLRAVEN? OLD SKULL, HE THINKS YOU LOOK KIND OF HOT AN' BOTHERED.
YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TOO OBSER VANT, OLD FRIEND
OLD SKULL, HE KNOWS HOW YOU FEEL. SOMETIMES HE GETS LONELY, HE REALLY DOES. HE GETS TO THINKIN' ABOUT HOW THINGS WAS... NOT THAT THINGS WAS REAL GOOD FOR OLD SKULL BEFORE THE MARTIANS COME
I KNOW, OLD FRIEND NOT TOO MANY PEOPLE WERE KIND TO YOU WERE THEY?
YOU WERE Mr KILLRAVEN AND OLD SKULL HE WON'T FORGET IT WON'T NEVER FORGET IT SEE, OLD SKULL, HE KNOWS HE GOT NO REASON TO FEEL BAD FOR HIMSELF CAUSE LOTS'VE FOLKS GOT IT WORSE LOTS OF FOLKS DON'T GOT FRIENDS LIKE YOU OLD SKULL, HE DON'T MIND SAYIN' IT
WELL, YOU EMBARRASS ME, OLD TIMER
FRIENDSH P AIN'T NOTH N' TO BE ASHAMED OF Mr KILLRAVEN IT AIN'T A BAD WORD
STILL AN' ALL, SOMETIMES OLD SKULL FEELS BAD HE KIND VE PINES FOR ALL THE FOLKS HE CAN'T SEE AGA N YA KNOW H S PA AN MA HIS LITTLE CALF, RANDY. EVEN HAWK TH NG IS, OLD SKULL, HE DIDN'T EVEN LIKE HAWK. BUT HE STILL MISSES HIM
YES AS IF A PART OF OUR HEART WAS CUT FROM US WHEN HAWK WAS K LLED A PART THAT REMINDS M'SHULLA ... YOU ... ME THAT WE HAVE NO SPECIAL SANCTION IN THIS WAR--
NO MMUNITY TO DEATH
M'SHULLA AND CARMILLA FROST WALK QUIETLY INTO THE CAMP. M'SHULLA IS UNCOMFORTABLE HE HADN'T EXPECTED TO FIND KILLRAVEN AWAKE. HE HOPES THE DARKNESS HIDES HIS UNEASE
TAKING A NIGHT TIME STROLL, MLD BROTHER?
Uh IT WAS THAT MARTIAN ROCKET uh MAK NG SUCH A GOD-AWFUL RACKET uh IT WOKE US AND WE uh

WENT TO OBSERVE IT FROM DIFFERENT POSITIONS, PERHAPS?
SOME THING LIKE THAT
THAT WAS A CLEVER QUIP, KILLRAVEN. SOMETIMES YOU BOTH ACT LIKE CHILDREN!
I DID NOT HAVE MUCH TIME FOR CHILDHOOD, CARMILLA WHAT I DO REMEMBER OF IT IS SEEN THROUGH A HAZE OF BLOOD --THE BLOOD OF MY MOTHER AS THE KEEPER SAUNDERS LED MY BROTHER JOSHUA AWAY... THE BLOOD IN THE MARTIAN ARENAS
I HAVE FEW CHILDISH DREAMS, PERHAPS ONLY ONE LAST ONE TO RESCUE MY BROTHER FROM THE MARTIANS
I'VE LOST A FEW DREAMS ALSO AND THEY ARE SO HARD TO LET GO OF AREN'T THEY? I WAS WRONG TO CHIDE YOU I SHOULDN'T HAVE ACTED SO BITCHY
WELL, WE HAVEN'T DONE A VERY GOOD JOB OF LOCATING THIS PLACE HE WAS HELD AT AND WHO KNOWS, THEY MIGHT HAVE MOVED YOUR BROTHER FROM THE PLACE OF THE YELLOW STONES
"WE WILL SOON BE ON OUR WAY. TOMORROW I AM GOING INSIDE THAT LAUNCH PORT!"
K.R., I THINK YOU BETTER SLEEP ON THAT IDEA. WE HAVEN'T DONE ENOUGH SURVEILLANCE YET
Mr KILLRAVEN DON'T MEAN HE'S GONNA WALK IN THERE M'SHULLA. HE MEANS HE'S GONNA GO ZAP HIMSELF INSIDE ONE'VE THEM MARTIAN HEADS, YOU'LL SEE HE'LL DO IT FOR SURE!
NIGHT ME VIGILANCE
- FROM WITHIN
- AND WITHOUT

THE REAL DAWN APPEARS AS A GREY GLARE OVER THE SALT-AIR SCRUBBED DUNES. THE AIR LIES STAGNANTLY, HOLDING THE FUMES OF SPENT FUEL AND THE STRONG SMELL OF SUN-BAKED ATLANTIC OCEAN SEAWEED
YOU OKAY, CARM? EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.. ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU FIRST WAKE UP.., YOU LOOK KIND OF I DON'T KNOW.. WORRIED OR SOMETHING
IT'S NOTHING AT LEAST, I HOPE IT'S NOTHING
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
IT JUST DAMN WELL BETTER BE NOTHING!
MISS CARM LLA WAKES UP IN SOME KINDA MOOD. OLD SKULL DON'T TH NK T S SO SAFE LYING BES DE HER THEN
DID THE SAND-CHIGGERS GET YOU LAST NIGHT MUD-BROTHER?
YOU NEVER SEE THE LITTLE SUCKERS WHILE THEY'RE CHEWING YOU UP!
BUGS DON'T BOTHER OLD SKULL NONE HE DON'T GET NARY A BITE
COURSE NOT THEY CAN'T BITE THROUGH A TOUGH OLD HIDE LIKE YOURS
WHAT RE YOU DOING ANY HOW?
CAN'T LET THESE LITTLE FELLERS CROAK, M'SHULLA THERE WOULDN'T BE NO BEAUTY 'ROUND HERE ATALL
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, K.R.? YOU'RE NOT GONNA TRY YOUR LITTLE MIND-STUNT ALREADY?
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO CONTROL THE POWER MORE THIS LAST MONTH. ABLE TO DIRECT IT, THOUGH I ADMIT IT STILL TAKES ME ABACK TO FIND MYSELF THRUST INSIDE A MARTIAN MIND
AFRAID MUD-BROTHER? YOU? OF WHAT?
I'M NOT SURE PERHAPS THAT ONE TIME I'LL FIND MYSELF PERMANENTLY TRAPPED INSIDE ONE OF THOSE MONSTROSITIES WOULDN'T THAT GIVE YOU PAUSE?
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO IMAGINE WHAT IT'D BE LIKE ENTOMBED INSIDE THOSE GOOSHY MUSH-POTATO SACK BODIES OF THEIRS-- OR WHAT IT'D BE LIKE TO LIFT MY ARM AND FIND IT WAS A TENTACLE.. WITH NO HANDS OR WRIGGLING FINGERS
STILL, THAT CAN'T HAPPEN TO YOU, K.R. IT'S AN IMPOSSIBILITY
YES, WELL WHAT I DO, TRANSMITTING MY CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN THEIRS WITHOUT THE HOST BEING AWARE I AM THERE IS SUPPOSED TO BE IMPOSSIBLE, TOO
YUK


SOMEHOW THE KEEPER WHITMAN DID SOMETHING TO ME DURING THE TWO YEARS HE HAD ME UNDER HIS TUTELAGE... SUPPOSEDLY TO CURE ME OF MY REBELLIOUS WAYS... BUT HE WASN'T A TRAITOR TO HIS SPECIES AS THE MARTIANS THOUGHT. IT WAS WHITMAN WHO GAVE ME THIS ABILITY, BUT I WAS ONLY 8 OR 9 THEN, AND ALL I REMEMBER ARE EXPERIMENTS
SO MANY EXPERIMENTS. BUT NOT THEIR PURPOSE. ALL I KNEW WAS THAT WHILE I WAS WITH WHITMAN I DID NOT HAVE TO FIGHT IN THE GLADITORIAL ARENAS FOR MARTIAN AMUSEMENT
YET I AM STALKED BY THE UNEASY FEELING THAT THERE IS ANOTHER STEP, AS IF I HAVE YET TO REACH THE FINAL POSSIBILITY OF THESE MIND INVASIONS
ALL THESE QUALMS WON'T STOP YOU FROM DOING IT, WILL THEY?
"I SEE NO OTHER OPTION, MUD-BROTHER. WE HAVE TO LEARN THE MEANING OF ALL THIS ACTIVITY AT THE SPACE CENTER -- AND IF WE ARE TO GET INSIDE WE MUST DISCOVER THEIR DEFENSE PROCEDURES. RECONNAISANCE AND STRATEGY, REMEMBER?

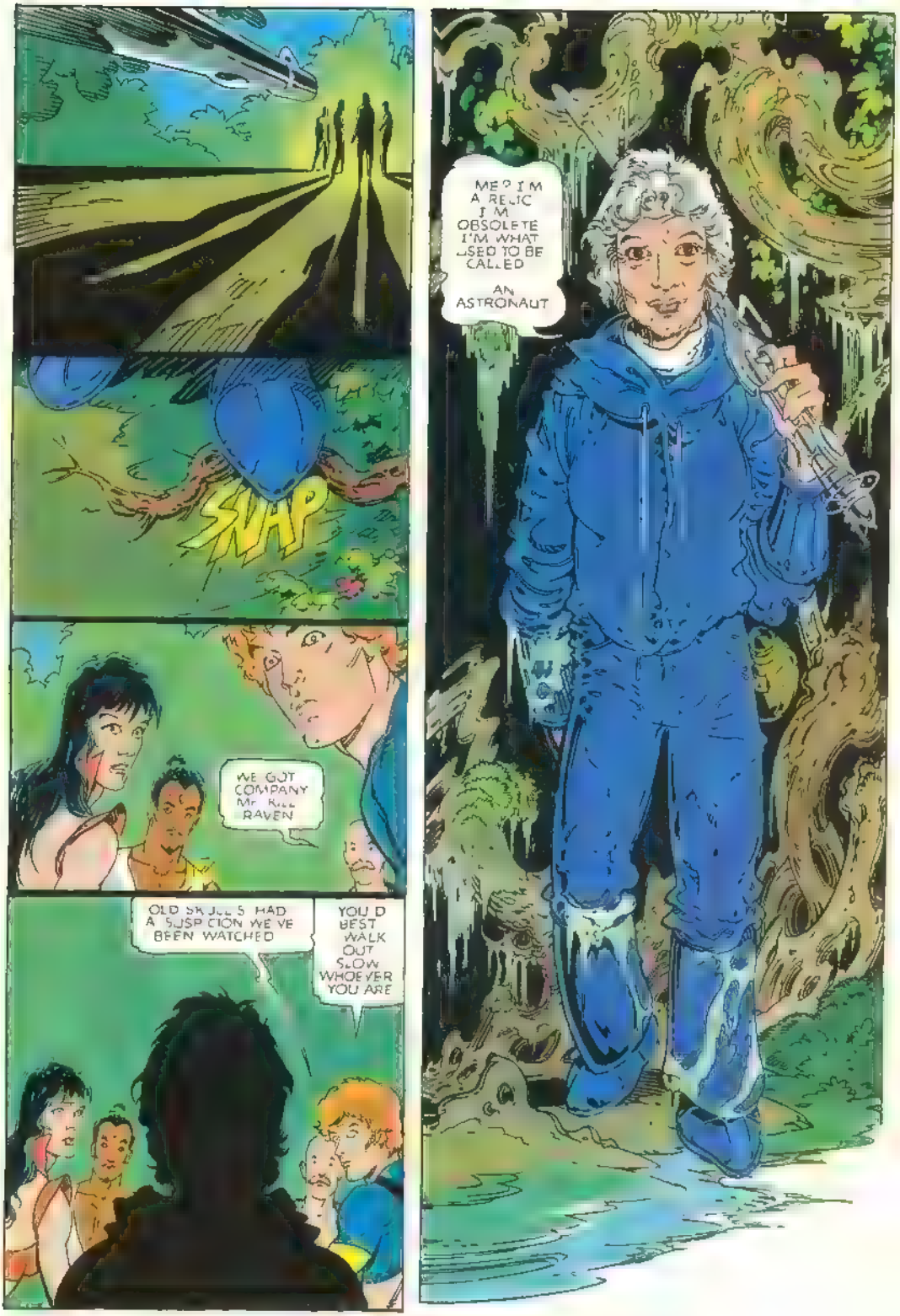

BUT TRUTH TO TELL M'SHULLA
YES ?
I WISH 'T WERE YOU
THAT HAD
THIS
DAMNABLE POWER
HA! I'LL BET YOU DO
Mr KILLRAVEN ARE YOU
?!
HE'S NO LONGER HERE
GOD HELP HIM
HE'S INSIDE THERE SOMEWHERE NOW!
HIS EFFORTS TO REACH THAT LEVEL OF DISCONNECTION, THAT SEVERING FROM HIS OWN LIMBIC AND THALAMUS SYSTEM, OCCURS LIKE THE ABRUPT BLAST FROM A WEAPON. HIS INTELLECT SHOT LIKE A BULLET INTO THE PULSATING PATHWAYS OF MARTIAN MOTOR AND SENSORY FIBERS.


I CAN'T BE
WELL, WHY CAN'T IT BE? IT IS HIM! THE HIGH OVERLORD!
HE IS SURE HIS MARTIAN HOST MUST SENSE HIS SURPRISE AND HATE. BUT THERE IS NO SIGN OF IT WHEN THE TWO SPEAK TELEPATHICALLY. THE MARTIAN IS OLD. HIS CHANCES TO BECOME AN ELITE MEMBER OF HIS RACE, TO BE ALLOWED TO WEAR BIO-CHEMECH ARMOR WHICH COUNTERS THE TERRIBLE DRAG OF EARTH GRAVITY ARE GONE. THE OVERLORD'S THOUGHTS ARE BENIGN IN THE MIDST OF RUBBLE "WHEN WILL OUR BUILDERS MAKE DOORWAYS AN OVERLORD CAN FIT THROUGH?
WE LOSE MORE DOORWAYS THAT WAY.
AND HEARING?
IS THAT A FIST CRASHING THROUGH MASONRY? YES.
A SOMEWHAT RECOGNIZABLE FIST

THE MARTIAN IS THE COMMANDER OF PROJECT REGENESIS. HE FEELS NO JEALOUSY AT THE OVERLORD'S EXALTED STATUS. HE UNDERSTANDS HIS PLACE IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS QUITE CLEARLY
THEIR THOUGHTS ARE LIKE ELECTRICAL CODES TICKLING THE NERVE FIBERS
"CAN THIS HUMAN WHO ACCOMPANIES YOU HEAR US?" THE COMMANDER ASKS, JUDICIOUSLY
"WHO? SAUNDERS? HE'S ONLY A KEEPER. AND KEEPERS ARE ONLY HUMAN SCIENTISTS WHO WORK FOR OUR CAUSE. AND HUMANS ARE HARDLY TELEPATHIC."
KILLRAVEN SMELLS THE HEAVY SCENT OF COMBUSTIBLE MIXTURES, THE SMELL OF MACHINES, OF GREASE AND OIL, THE SMELL OF EXHAUST FUMES THAT STRANGLE THE AIR
"HERE IS THE BACKBONE OF PROJECT REGENESIS," SAYS THE COMMANDER, OF THE TOWERING ROCKET, BUT WITH OUT PRIDE. HE HAS SIMPLY DONE WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE
"THE HUMAN DRONES ARE DISSPIRITED TO SEE US SUBVERT THEIR PRECIOUS ROCKET SITE. A FEW OF THE OLDER DRONES WERE NASA OFFICIALS."
"NASA?" ASKS THE OVERLORD
"THE GROUP THAT MADE THE CLUMSY ROCKETS THE EARTHLINGS LAUNCHED REMEMBER THE PRIMITIVE FEW THAT CROSSED OUR PLANET AND NEVER KNEW WE WERE THERE?"
THE OVERLORD RELIVES THE MOMENT, TO THE SLIGHTEST DETAIL, AS HE WATCHED THAT ARCHAIC ROCKET ORBIT ABOUT MARS
YES. THIS ROCKET WILL SERVE OUR PURPOSE AND SO WILL YOU, KEEPER SAUNDERS. WON'T YOU?
YE ES. EVERY THING IS IN READ NESS FOR OUR SEPARATE PROJECT. WE REQUIRE ONLY PRECISE TIMING TO RELEASE OUR SURPR SE WEAPON!

WORDS FELT RATHER THAN HEARD; IMAGES VIEWED AND ANALYZED. A THIRD PART OF HIM WORRIES ABOUT HIS DEFENSELESS PHYSICAL SELF.
AN ENEMY COULD SLASH HIS FLESH, TEAR OUT HIS THROAT. HE COULD RETURN TO A BODY SPILLING BLOOD, CRIPPLED WITH PAIN.
BUT NO! NOT WHILE OLD SKULL BREATHES NO ENEMY COULD GET BY HIM
IN THE MIDST OF HIS COLD ANALYSIS OF THE INSTALLATION, AND THE HOT EMOTION OF HIS HATRED FOR THE OVERSEER, THE FEAR IS LIKE A CANCEROUS BUBBLE, BURSTING!
ONCE, CARMILLA IMPATIENTLY TRIED TO EXPLAIN HOW ONE SECTION OF HIS BRAIN CONTROLLED HIS BREATHING AND THE PULSE OF HIS HEART WHAT HAD SHE CALLED IT ?
SOME KIND OF FORMATION, YES! A RETICULAR FORMATION
SOMEHOW THE TANGLED MASS OF NEURONS CONTINUED THEIR FUNCTION, FED BLOOD AND OXYGEN THROUGH HIS BODY HE WISHES TO FEEL HIS OWN PULSE AGAIN
HIS RELEASE IS AS SUDDEN AND SHARP AS HIS DEPARTURE
THERE'S NO MISTAKE
ABOUT WHAT?
PAY ATTENTION, M'SHULLA M' KILLRAVEN'S COMIN' ROUND!

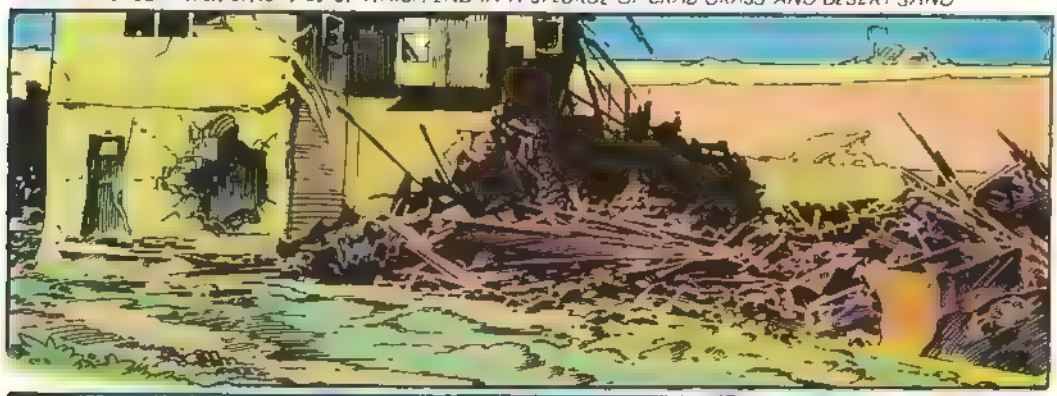
NOT SO FAST NOW OLD SKULL FIGURES YOU'LL ONLY FALL ON YOUR FACE YOU GET UP SO FAST
DAMN! YOU DON'T NORMALLY COME BACK WITH SUCH A VENGEANCE!
THE OVERLORD S IN THERE! I SAW HIM! JUST AS GLEEFULLY CRUEL AS EVER
I THINK HE'S ONE OF THE FEW MARTIANS WHO TRULY ENJOYS HIMSELF
HE ENJOYED THE NIGHT HE SET THE RATS ON ME--
BUT WE'LL ENJOY TONIGHT WHEN WE GO IN AFTER HIM!
VERY MELODRAMATIC, KILLRAVEN SPOKEN LIKE THE TRUE, RASH TEENAGER YOU ARE, ALTHOUGH I STILL CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW ANYONE BORN IN 2001 CAN LOOK LIKE AN ADON S
IS THAT WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIGURE IN THAT CALCULATION NOTE BOOK OF YOURS?
NOT THIS TIME. A FEW CALCULATIONS THAT ARE MORE PERSONALLY DISTRESSING
DOESN'T IT SEEM AN ODD COINCIDENCE TO YOU, HOWEVER, THAT WE SHOULD CROSS PATHS WITH THE OVERSEER AGAIN, WHEN THE LAST TIME WE SAW HIM WAS WAY BACK IN WASHINGTON, D.C.?
YOU THINK THAT SOMEHOW HE KNOWS WE ARE HERE. BUT THAT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT HELLISH DESIGNS GO ON BEYOND THOSE BARRIERS
THEY ARE TEARING THE GUTS OUT OF OUR PLANET, IS THAT MELODRAMATIC ENOUGH FOR YOU?
THEY'RE STRIPPING THE LAND OF EVERY ESSENTIAL ELEMENT THEY ARE GOING TO GO BACK TO THEIR HOMEWORLD YOU SEE NOT ONLY ON THE NOURISHMENT OF OUR CORPSES BUT ON THE CORPSE OF EARTH!
A PROJECT SO CLOSE TO THE OVERSEER'S HEART WOULD BRING HIM TO IT. BUT COME NIGHTFALL, WE WILL APPROACH FROM THE OCEAN FRONTAGE, WHERE THEIR SECURITY IS LIGHTEST... AND WE WILL PUT AN END TO THEIR PASSIONLESS DREAMS!

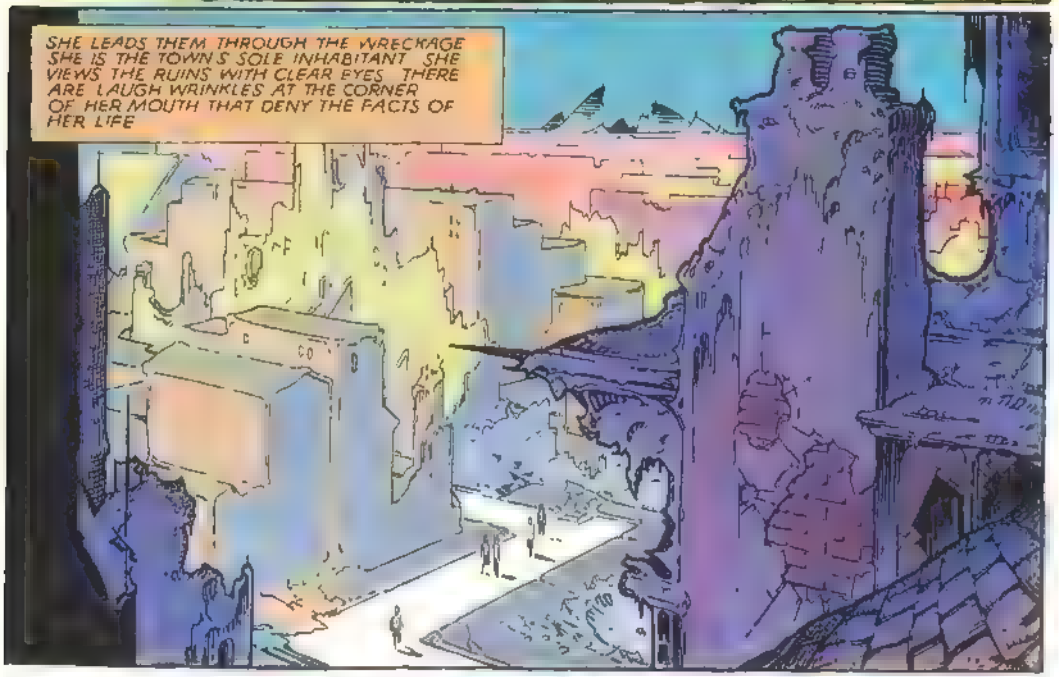

SNAP
WE GOT COMPANY Mr. Kill RAVEN
OLD SKULLS HAD A SUSPICION WE'VE BEEN WATCHED
YOU'D BEST WALK OUT SLOW WHOEVER YOU ARE
ME? I'M A RELIC I'M OBSOLETE I'M WHAT USED TO BE CALLED AN ASTRONAUT

Chapter Two

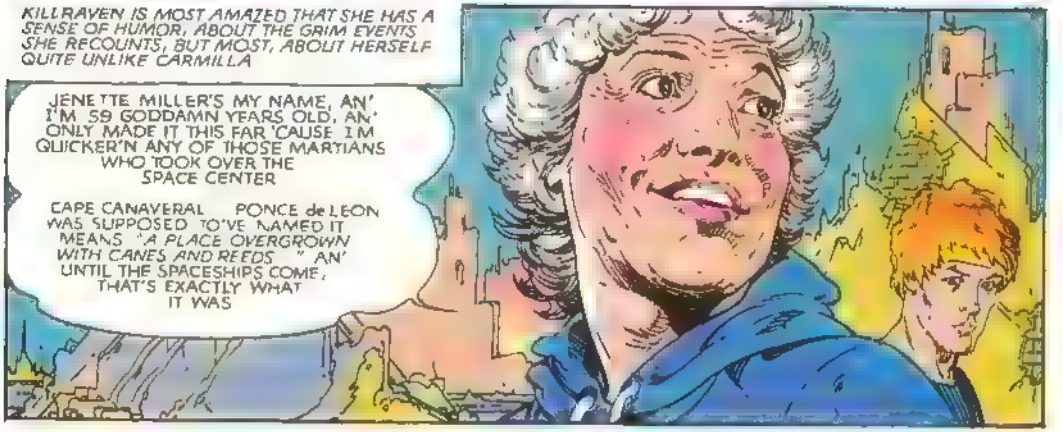
COCOA BEACH BLUES

COCOA BEACH BLISTERS AND RUSTS UNDER THE SUN AND SALT-WIND, A MONTAGE OF USELESS METAL AND CRACKED PAVEMENTS ALL OF WHICH END IN A SPLURGE OF CRAB GRASS AND DESERT SAND



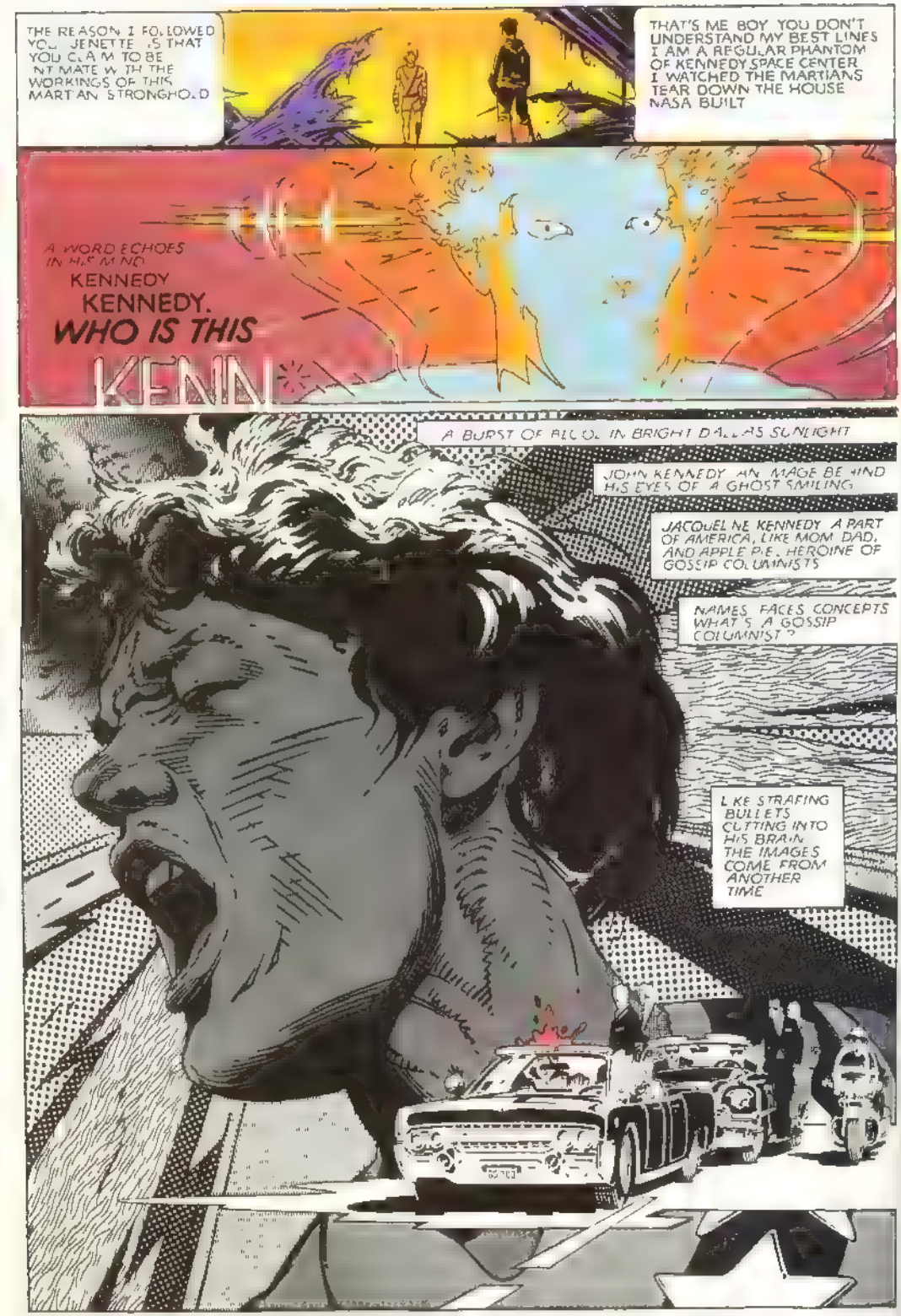

SHE LEADS THEM THROUGH THE WRECKAGE SHE IS THE TOWN'S SOLE INHABITANT SHE VIEWS THE RUINS WITH CLEAR EYES THERE ARE LAUGH WRINKLES AT THE CORNER OF HER MOUTH THAT DENY THE FACTS OF HER LIFE

KILLRAVEN IS MOST AMAZED THAT SHE HAS A SENSE OF HUMOR, ABOUT THE GRIM EVENTS SHE RECOUNTS, BUT MOST, ABOUT HERSELF QUITE UNLIKE CARMILLA

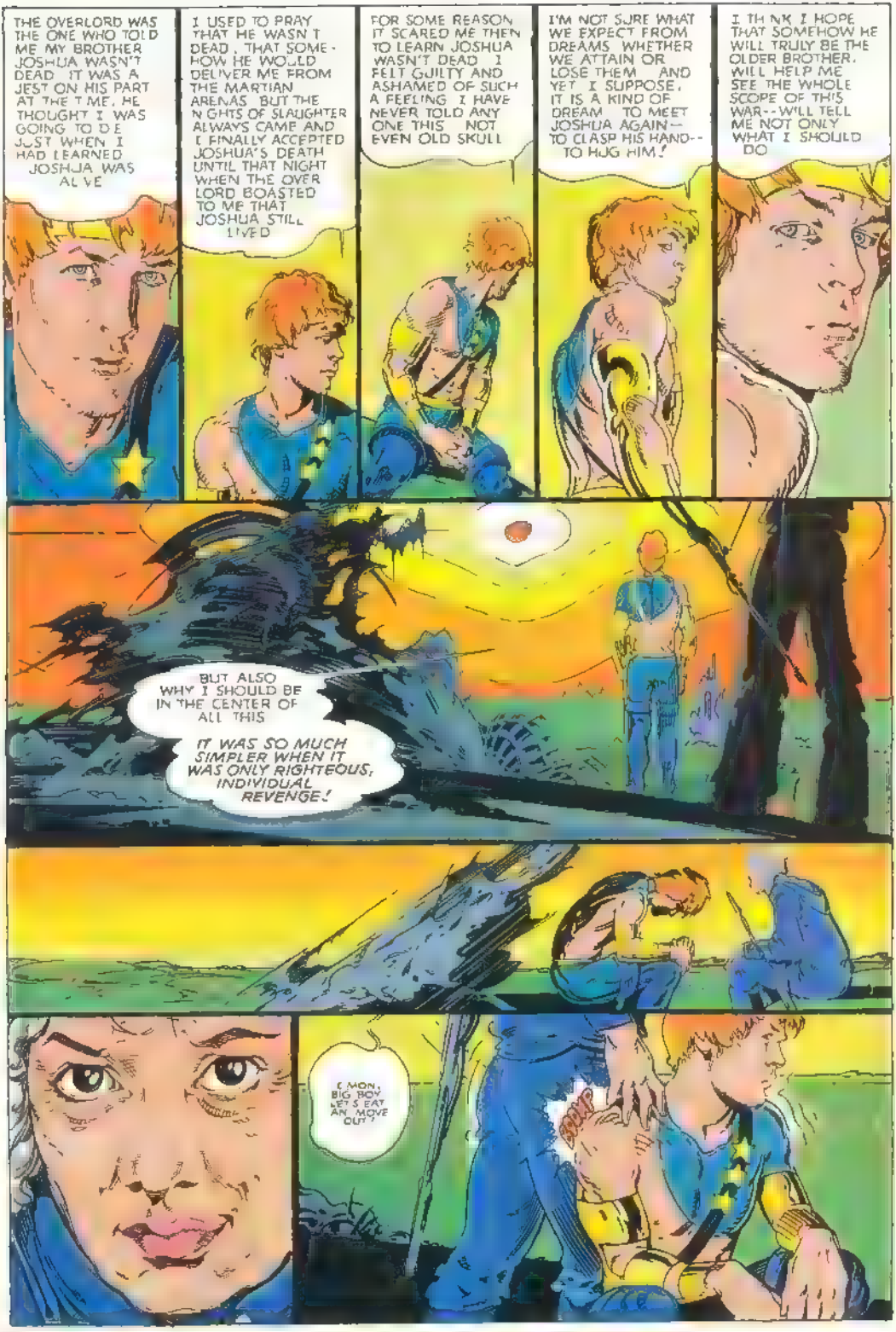

JENETTE MILLER'S MY NAME, AN' I'M 59 GODDAMN YEARS OLD, AN' ONLY MADE IT THIS FAR 'CAUSE I'M QUICKER'N ANY OF THOSE MARTIANS WHO TOOK OVER THE SPACE CENTER
CAPE CANAVERAL PONCE de LEON WAS SUPPOSED TO'VE NAMED IT MEANS "A PLACE OVERGROWN WITH CANES AND REEDS " AN' UNTIL THE SPACESHIPS COME, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS

I WAS A LITTLE GIRL WHO GREW UP WITH MERCURY... GEMINI... APOLLO COLUMBIA WHAT MAGICAL NAMES THEY WERE FOR ME THEY HELD THE UNIVERSE
ARMSTRONG, ALDRIN, Jr., AND COLLINS PART OF A FORGOTTEN WALK ON THE MOON
WHY IS IT... WHEN YOU SPOKE THOSE NAMES IT TOUCHED SOMETHING.. LIKE NAMES I KNEW . YET HOW WOULD I KNOW THEM ?
YOU WEREN'T EVEN ALIVE WHEN ALL THIS HAPPENED AN' THE MARTIANS SURE MADE MADE SURE YOU DIDN'T GET TAUGHT ANY HISTORY
IN THE 1990'S I GOT MY CHANCE TO BECOME ONE OF THE BRETHREN AN ASTRONAUT 'COURSE BY THAT TIME MOST OF THE HELL-RAISERS WERE GONE ASTRONAUTS HAD HIGH VIS BILITY SO THE GOVERNMENT TRIED TO WEED OUT THE COWBOYS NO MORE NEW VISTAS FOR THE RESTLESS THEY WANTED US EDUCATED SERIOUS AN' SANITIZED COURSE LOOK AT ME YOU CAN SEE THEY DIDN'T ALWAYS GET THEIR WISH
ASTRONAUTS GOT MADE INTO HEROES ALWAYS THOUGHT I KNEW WHAT A HERO WAS UNTIL THEY CALLED ME ONE
HEROES ?
WHAT A FANCIFUL TITLE
OLD SKULL, HE THINKS YOU'RE ONE TO ALL THOSE BANDS OF PEOPLE WAITIN' FOR THE DAY WHEN THEY'LL ALL FIGHT BACK AS ONE
NONSENSE, OLD FRIEND I AM A WARRIOR PERHAPS BUT EVEN THAT WAS NOT ENTIRELY BY CHOICE

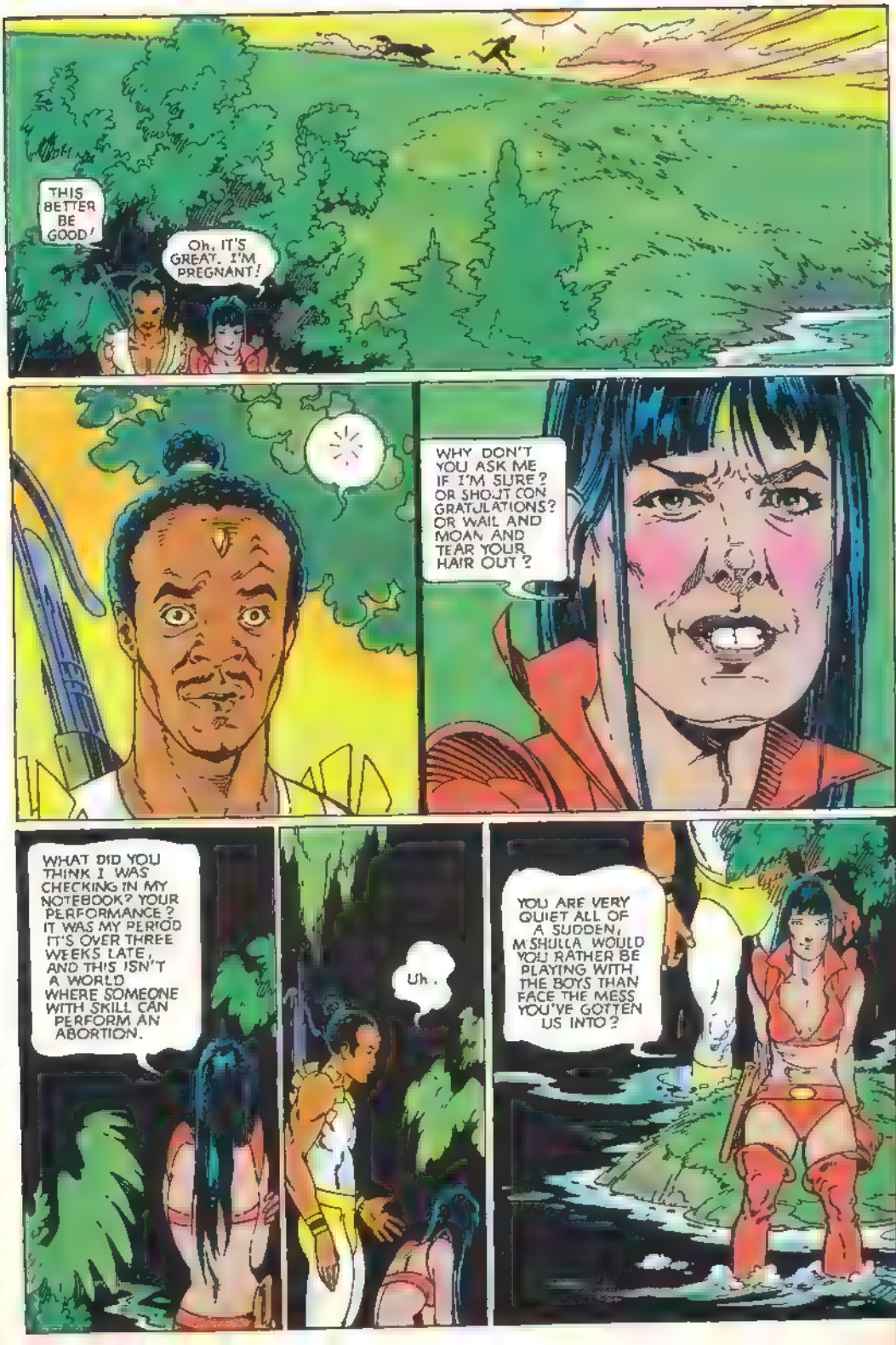
IT WAS MY CHOICE... MY DREAM TO BE AN ASTRONAUT... BUT I DIDN'T KNOW FROM NOTHIN' ABOUT HEROES... THEN, SOME FEMINIST GROUPS BEGAN MAKIN' A BIG DEAL OUT OF ME
HELD ME UP AS SOME KIND OF BEACON TO OTHER WOMEN... I BECAME A GODDAMN SYMBOL! THOSE FEMINIST LEADERS LOVED TO RUB ELBOWS WITH ME... BUT DIDN'T UNDERSTAND MY JOKES
THEY'D ALL GET MAD AS HORNETS IF I DIDN'T ATTEND ALL THEIR SEMINARS "YOU'VE GOTTA HELP THE SISTERS!" THEY'D WAIL
HELL, THEY KNEW HOW TO INSTILL AS MUCH GUILT AS A CHURCH
THIS IS HOME, SUCH AS IT IS, FOLKS, BUT WE GOT PLENTY OF FOOD... ANYHOW, ALL I KNEW, ALL THIS COMMOTION WAS DRIVIN' ME RIGHT OUT'VE MY EVER-LOVIN' GOURD! I JUST WANTED TO FLY SHIPS TOUCH THE STARS, LIKE YOU WERE SAYIN'! ALL THAT FANCIFUL BULLSHIT
THAT'S NOT QUITE THE WAY I SAID IT
CLOSE ENOUGH
THESE FOLKS FIGURED I HADDA REPRESENT ALL WOMAN KIND. NOW, I ASK YOU, WHO THE HELL CAN TAKE THAT KIND OF PRESSURE?
YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN GRATEFUL
FOR WHAT? THEIR ADULATION? WASN'T WORTH DOGSCRATCH!
AND LISTEN, THOSE GROUPS MADE JUST AS MANY WOMEN HATE ME LIKE THEY FIGURED I WAS KICKIN' THEIR ASSES AN' SAYIN' WHAT THEY'D DONE WITH THEIR LIVES WASN'T WORTH DIDDLEY SQUAT!
CAME TO BE, THE KENNEDY SPACE CENTER ON CANAVERAL WAS MY SANCTUARY, 'CEPT MY SUPERIORS KEPT SENDIN' ME OUT
THEY WANTED A HIGHLY VISIBLE WINDOW DRESSING MANNIKIN HOWEVER, THAT'S THE ONE THING.
I NEVER BEEN TOO GOOD AT


THE REASON I FOLLOWED YOU JENETTE IS THAT YOU CLAIM TO BE INTIMATE WITH THE WORKINGS OF THIS MARTIAN STRONGHOLD
THAT'S ME BOY YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND MY BEST LINES I AM A REGULAR PHANTOM OF KENNEDY SPACE CENTER I WATCHED THE MARTIANS TEAR DOWN THE HOUSE NASA BUILT
A WORD ECHOES IN HIS MIND
KENNEDY
KENNEDY.
WHO IS THIS
KENN
A BURST OF RED ORANGE IN BRIGHT DALLAS SUNLIGHT
JOHN KENNEDY AN IMAGE BEHIND HIS EYES OF A GHOST SMILING
JACQUELINE KENNEDY A PART OF AMERICA, LIKE MOM DAD, AND APPLE PIE. HEROINE OF GOSSIP COLUMNISTS
NAMES FACES CONCEPTS WHAT'S A GOSSIP COLUMNIST?
LIKE STRAFING BULLETS CUTTING INTO HIS BRAIN THE IMAGES COME FROM ANOTHER TIME

KENNEDY WAS A PRESIDENT,.. I WAS JUST A KID WHEN SOMEONE I FORGET WHO... KILLED HIM
SHOT! HE WAS SHOT AND THIS COUNTRY... THIS AMERICA.. IT WAS IN SHOCK... STUNNED AND AFTER HIS DEATH MANY PLACES WERE EAGERLY NAMED AFTER HIM
HOW DO YOU KNOW ALL THIS, KILLRAVEN? THE MARTIANS DID NOT EDUCATE YOU IN HUMAN HISTORY. THEY'VE TRIED THEIR BEST TO ERADICATE OUR PAST, IF ANYTHING.
IT'S HAPPENED BEFORE. LIKE IN THE OCTO TYPANUM VIEW-SCOPE VOICES, LYRICS, ESSENCES, CAUGHT IN SOME BEAT WITH ALMOST A SEXUAL RHYTHM
I HAVE MEMORIES OF THINGS THAT NEVER HAPPENED TO ME. HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE? I HAVE SENSED OTHER WARS WHERE MEN KILLED OTHER MEN, NOT MARTIANS
YOU'RE SOMETHING ELSE, YOUNG FELLA YOU GOT SOME BODY, BUT IT'S ALL TIGHTER N A TICK'S STOMACH EASE UP
WILL YOU TAKE IT EASY WHEN YOU FIND OUT THAT I WANT YOU TO GET US ALL INSIDE THE SPACE CENTER?
YOU WANT IT, YOU GOT IT!
REASON I DIDN'T COME FORWARD RIGHT OFF, I WANTED THE CHANCE TO CHECK YOU OUT
SEE, I HATE WHAT THOSE MARTIANS KILLED OUT HERE THE CHANCE FOR HUMANS TO GO BEYOND. PERHAPS TO BE BETTER, AS A RACE, THAN WE'D EVER BEEN I WATCHED THEM TAKE CAPE KENNEDY. AND MAKE A MOCKERY OF IT. TWISTED MY DREAMS
GOT ONE LAST DREAM, I GUESS KEEPS ME WARM AT NIGHT KNOW WHAT THAT DREAM IS?
TO WAIT FOR THE DAY WHEN I COULD SHOVE IT UP THEIR CONSTIPATED ASSES FOR WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO THIS PLACE I LOVED THIS PLACE I WOULD HAVE DIED FOR THAT I WOULD STILL DIE FOR!
I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE ME THE CHANCE TO GET THEM BIG FELLA
AN' AFTER THAT, YOU AN ME OUGHTTA GO OUT AN' GET GOOD AN' DRUNK AN' I'LL TEACH YOU HOW TO LAUGH BOY
--LAUGH FROM THE GUT LAUGH BECAUSE IT'S ALL A LITTLE BIT SAD AN' NUTS AN' ALL WE GOT IS BEING HUMAN
LAUGH? SOME MONSTROSITY LIKE THE OVERSEER IS HARD TO LAUGH AT
LISTEN, LIVIN' IN COCOA BEACH WASN'T ALWAYS A GUT-LAUGH BELIEVE ME

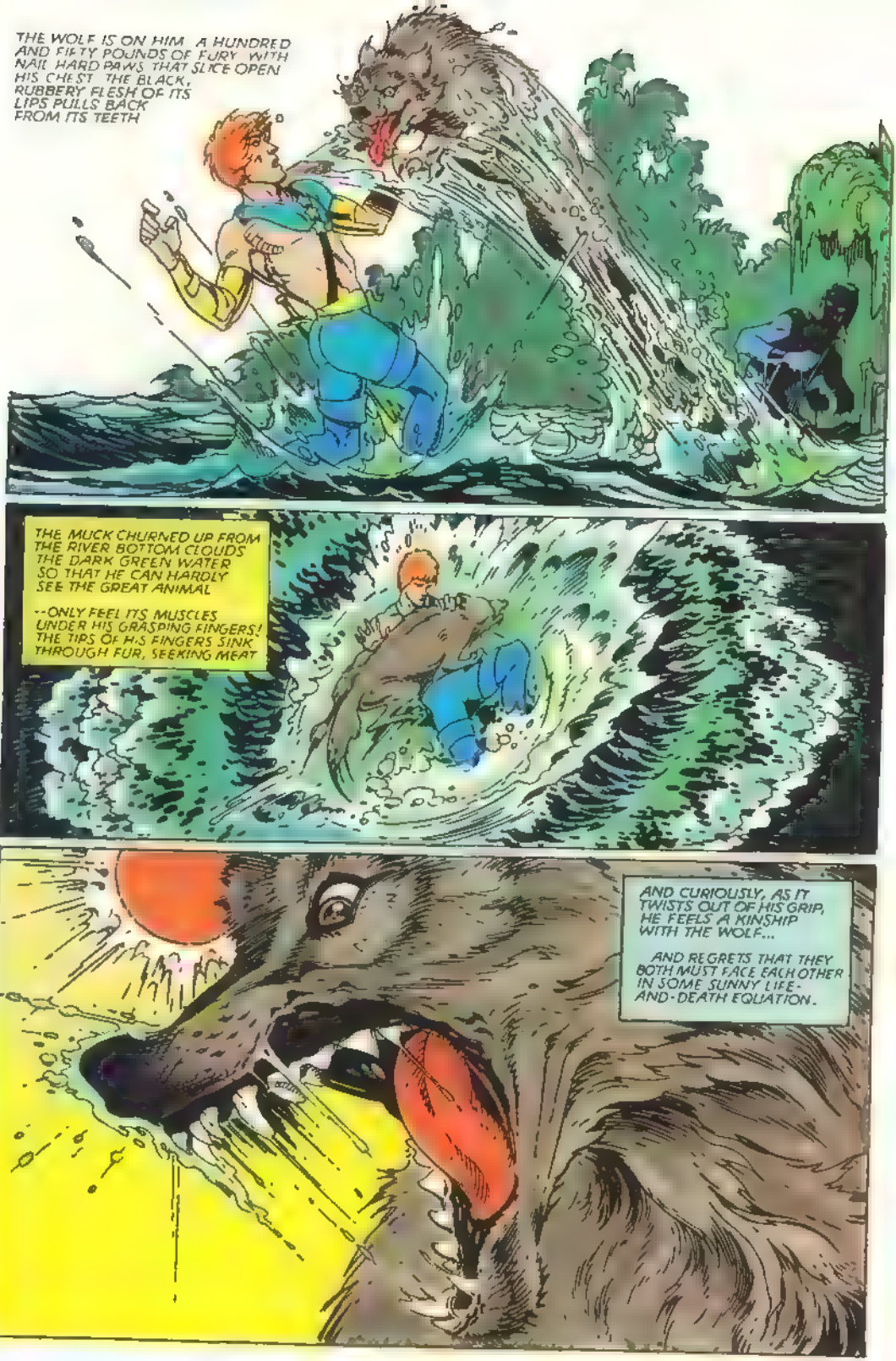

THE OVERLORD WAS THE ONE WHO TOLD ME MY BROTHER JOSHUA WASN'T DEAD IT WAS A JEST ON HIS PART AT THE TIME. HE THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE JUST WHEN I HAD LEARNED JOSHUA WAS ALIVE
I USED TO PRAY THAT HE WASN'T DEAD. THAT SOMEHOW HE WOULD DELIVER ME FROM THE MARTIAN ARENAS BUT THE NIGHTS OF SLAUGHTER ALWAYS CAME AND I FINALLY ACCEPTED JOSHUA'S DEATH UNTIL THAT NIGHT WHEN THE OVERLORD BOASTED TO ME THAT JOSHUA STILL LIVED
FOR SOME REASON IT SCARED ME THEN TO LEARN JOSHUA WASN'T DEAD I FELT GUILTY AND ASHAMED OF SUCH A FEELING I HAVE NEVER TOLD ANY ONE THIS NOT EVEN OLD SKULL
I'M NOT SURE WHAT WE EXPECT FROM DREAMS WHETHER WE ATTAIN OR LOSE THEM AND YET I SUPPOSE, IT IS A KIND OF DREAM TO MEET JOSHUA AGAIN-- TO CLASP HIS HAND-- TO HUG HIM!
I THINK I HOPE THAT SOMEHOW HE WILL TRULY BE THE OLDER BROTHER. WILL HELP ME SEE THE WHOLE SCOPE OF THIS WAR--WILL TELL ME NOT ONLY WHAT I SHOULD DO
BUT ALSO WHY I SHOULD BE IN THE CENTER OF ALL THIS
IT WAS SO MUCH SIMPLER WHEN IT WAS ONLY RIGHTEOUS, INDIVIDUAL REVENGE!
C'MON, BIG BOY LET'S EAT AN MOVE OUT!
SLURP

THEY TRUDGE UP THE BANANA RIVER. THE MUCK SUCKS AT THEIR FEET AND SEEMS TO ABSORB THE SOUND OF THEIR PASSAGE. IN THE QUIET STILLNESS OF EARLY AFTERNOON, THE RIVER DECEPTIVELY APPEARS AS IF INDUSTRY, HUMAN WASTE AND WAR HAVE NEVER TOUCHED IT
WE COME UP ON CAPE KENNEDY THIS WAY, JUST IN CASE THEY GOT ANY SCENTERS ON THE PROWL Y'SEE. WHEN YOU NEAR THE PERIMETER, THEY'RE A MITE MORE CAUTIOUS
WHAT THEY'RE DOING IS COMPLETING AN ORBITING SPACE STATION. SO THE PROBLEM, AS I SEE IT, IS GETTIN' INSIDE THEIR MASTER CONTROL TOWER.
I'D'VE SABOTAGED THEIR BUTTS LONG AGO IF IT WERE POSSIBLE FOR ONE PERSON.
M'SHULLA WE'VE GOT TO TALK
I WAS HOPIN TO DO THAT DAYS AGO BUT ALL YOU WANTED TO DO WAS THROW INSULTS AND BROOD WELL, NOW YOU'VE GOT ME GOOD AN MAD, AN I'M NOT SO SURE I WANT TO TALK
MUD BROTHER, YOU'D BEST JOIN US AND HEAR WHAT JENETTE HAS TO SAY
HE'S GOT A FEW OTHER THINGS TO HEAR, KILL RAVEN YOU GO AHEAD. WE'LL CATCH UP TO YOU
I'M NOT CRAZY ABOUT SPLIT TING UP
DON'T ARGUE WITH HER, OR WE'LL BE HERE UNTIL NIGHT-FALL.
OKAY THEY'RE YOUR PEOPLE, BIG BOY


THIS BETTER BE GOOD!
Oh, IT'S GREAT. I'M PREGNANT!
WHY DON'T YOU ASK ME IF I'M SURE? OR SHOUT CONGRATULATIONS? OR WAIL AND MOAN AND TEAR YOUR HAIR OUT?
WHAT DID YOU THINK I WAS CHECKING IN MY NOTEBOOK? YOUR PERFORMANCE? IT WAS MY PERIOD IT'S OVER THREE WEEKS LATE, AND THIS ISN'T A WORLD WHERE SOMEONE WITH SKILL CAN PERFORM AN ABORTION.
Uh.
YOU ARE VERY QUIET ALL OF A SUDDEN, M'SHULLA WOULD YOU RATHER BE PLAYING WITH THE BOYS THAN FACE THE MESS YOU'VE GOTTEN US INTO?

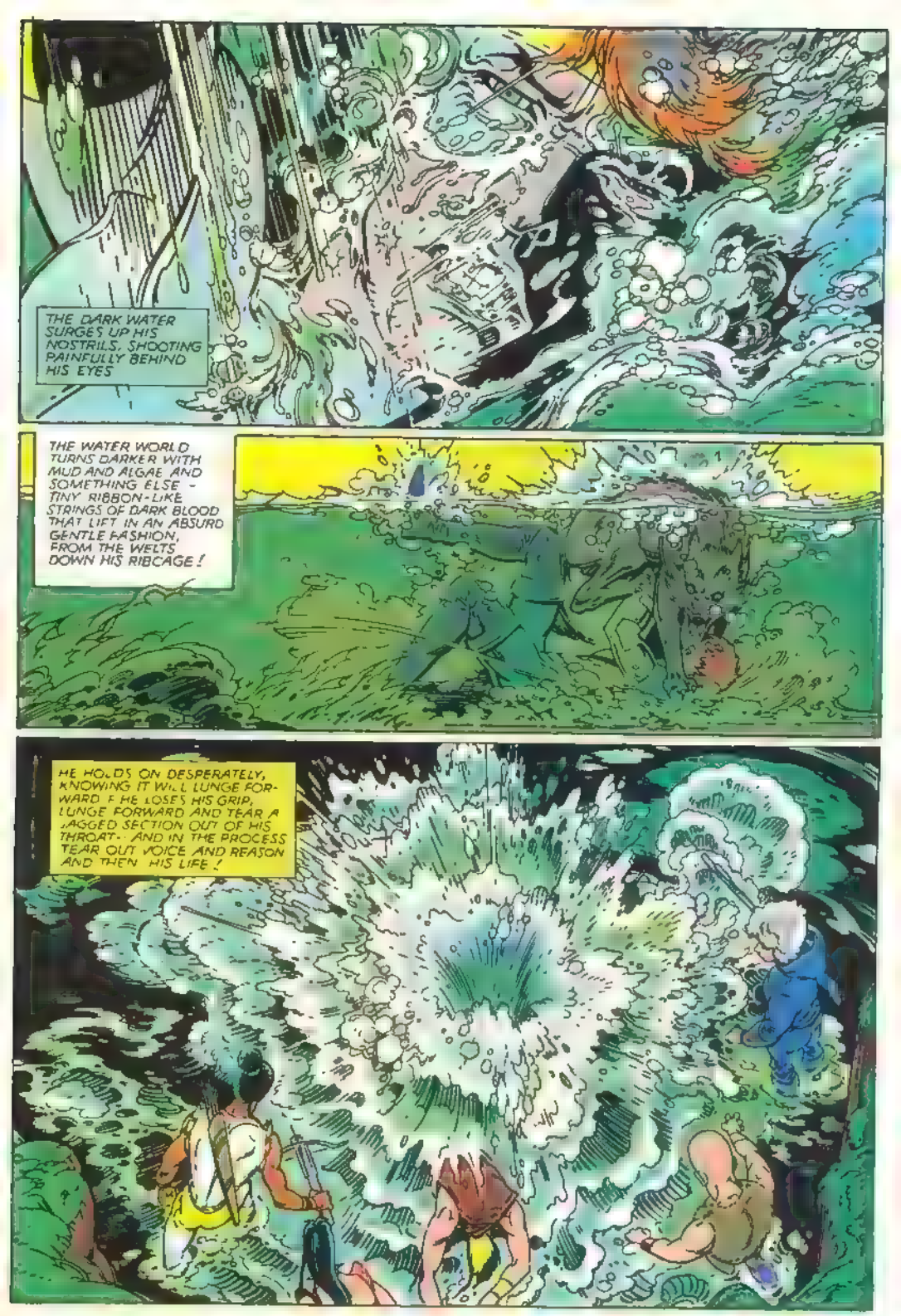
WAIT UP A SECOND! WHY IS THIS ALL MY FAULT? THERE WERE TWO OF US MAKING LOVE!
AND ONLY ONE OF US HAS TO PAY FOR IT!
IT'S MY CHILD, TOO!
OH, REALLY! I SUPPOSE YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO CARRY IT AROUND IN YOUR BELLY FOR NINE GODDAMN MONTHS!
THINK ABOUT IT, M'SHULLA THINK WITH YOUR BRAIN INSTEAD OF YOUR COCK! WHAT THE HELL KIND'VE WORLD IS THIS CHILD GOING TO BE BORN INTO?
HE'S GOT A HELL OF A FUTURE, DON'T YOU THINK?
YOU'RE BEING A PAIN IN...
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

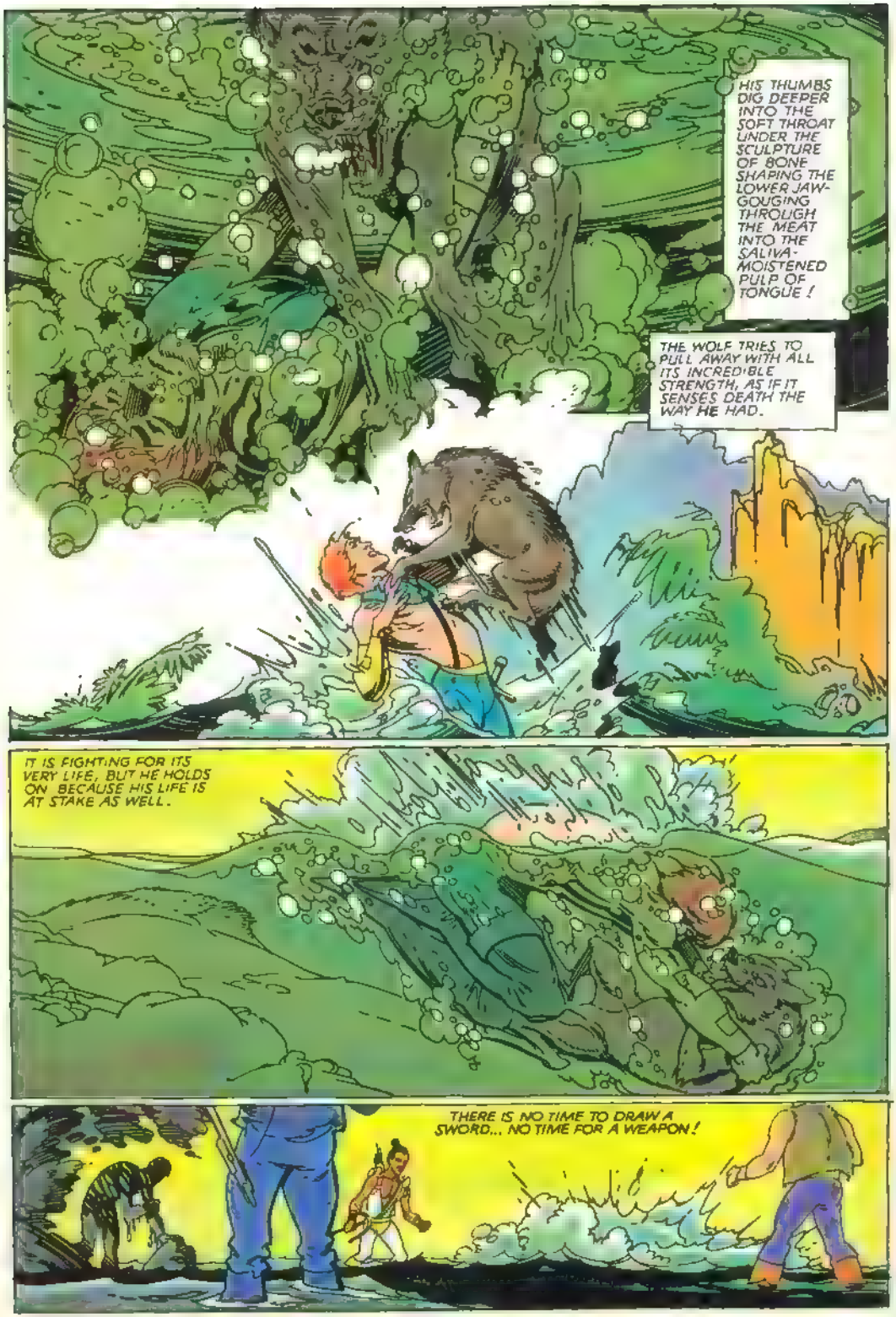
THE MAN AND WOLF COME LEAPING INTO THE AIR, BLOTTING OUT THE SUN FOR ONE INCREDIBLE, VIOLENT SECOND! SHAFTS OF LIGHT DANCE OFF FLESH AND FUR, AND THE SOUND OF IMPACT IN MID-AIR SHATTERS THE AFTERNOON QUIET
KILLRAVEN IS QUITE USED TO SHATTERED QUIET. IT HARDLY ELICITS ANY FEAR RESPONSE THESE DAYS
HIS IMMEDIATE IMPULSE IS TO REACH FOR A SILVER STAR, BUT HE AS QUICKLY REJECTS IT. THE STAR WOULD RIP THROUGH BOTH WOLF AND MAN
THE WOLF IS MAGNIFICENT, IN HIS FURY SIZE AND STRENGTH. KILLRAVEN IMAGINES A BURNING INTELLIGENCE BEHIND ITS GOLDEN YELLOW EYES.

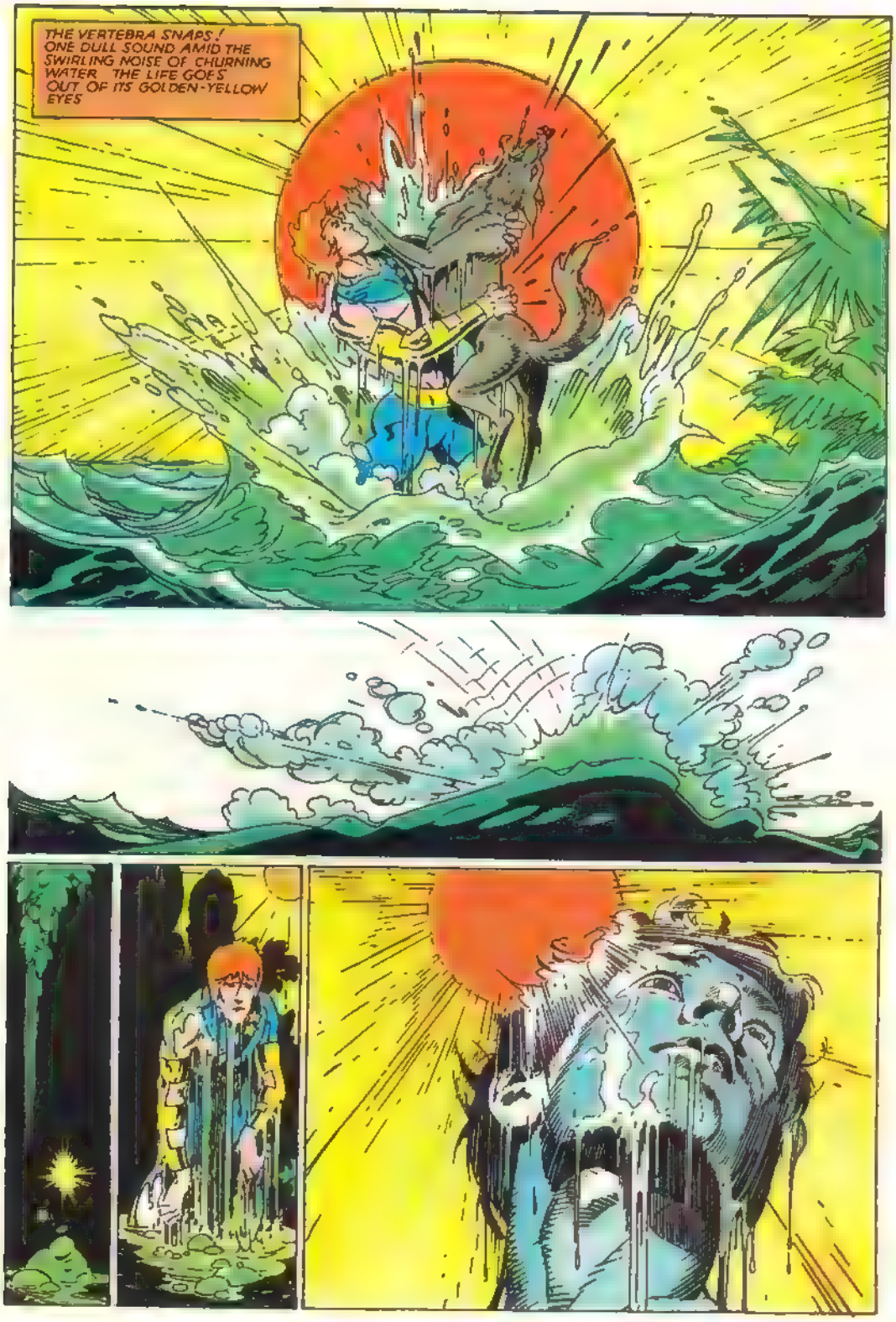

THE WOLF IS ON HIM. A HUNDRED AND FIFTY POUNDS OF FURY WITH NAIL HARD PAWS THAT SLICE OPEN HIS CHEST. THE BLACK, RUBBERY FLESH OF ITS LIPS PULLS BACK FROM ITS TEETH
THE MUCK CHURNED UP FROM THE RIVER BOTTOM CLOUDS THE DARK GREEN WATER SO THAT HE CAN HARDLY SEE THE GREAT ANIMAL
--ONLY FEEL ITS MUSCLES UNDER HIS GRASPING FINGERS! THE TIPS OF HIS FINGERS SINK THROUGH FUR, SEEKING MEAT
AND CURIOUSLY, AS IT TWISTS OUT OF HIS GRIP, HE FEELS A KINSHIP WITH THE WOLF...
AND REGRETS THAT THEY BOTH MUST FACE EACH OTHER IN SOME SUNNY LIFE-AND-DEATH EQUATION.

Chapter Three

BLOOD AND PASSION


THE DARK WATER SURGES UP HIS NOSTRILS, SHOOTING PAINFULLY BEHIND HIS EYES
THE WATER WORLD TURNS DARKER WITH MUD AND ALGAE AND SOMETHING ELSE - TINY RIBBON-LIKE STRINGS OF DARK BLOOD THAT LIFT IN AN ABSURD GENTLE FASHION, FROM THE WELTS DOWN HIS RIBCAGE!
HE HOLDS ON DESPERATELY, KNOWING IT WILL LUNGE FORWARD IF HE LOSES HIS GRIP, LUNGE FORWARD AND TEAR A JAGGED SECTION OUT OF HIS THROAT - AND IN THE PROCESS TEAR OUT VOICE AND REASON AND THEN HIS LIFE!


HIS THUMBS DIG DEEPER INTO THE SOFT THROAT UNDER THE SCULPTURE OF BONE SHAPING THE LOWER JAW- GOUGING THROUGH THE MEAT INTO THE SALIVA- MOISTENED PULP OF TONGUE!
THE WOLF TRIES TO PULL AWAY WITH ALL ITS INCREDIBLE STRENGTH, AS IF IT SENSES DEATH THE WAY HE HAD.
IT IS FIGHTING FOR ITS VERY LIFE, BUT HE HOLDS ON BECAUSE HIS LIFE IS AT STAKE AS WELL.
THERE IS NO TIME TO DRAW A SWORD... NO TIME FOR A WEAPON!


THE VERTEBRA SNAPS! ONE DULL SOUND AMID THE SWIRLING NOISE OF CHURNING WATER. THE LIFE GOES OUT OF ITS GOLDEN-YELLOW EYES

HE RISES, COUGHING THE DIRTY WATER OUT OF HIS LUNGS AND NOSTRILS. FINALLY HE CAN SEE THE SUN AGAIN, SEE OLD SKULL RUSHING TO AID HIM, SEE THE MAN HE HAS SAVED.

BUT MOST HIS EYES SEE THE LIMP, BROKEN FORM OF THE WOLF AND LIKE THE AFTERMATH OF MANY A VICTORY, HE FEELS EMPTY.. FORLORN

. AND WISHES HE WERE SOMEWHERE ELSE.

GOOD GOD JONATHAN! IT'S YOU! IT'S REALLY YOU!

WHAT DID YOU CALL ME?

YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE ME? NO! OF COURSE YOU WOULDN'T! WE WERE CHILDREN THE LAST TIME WE SAW EACH OTHER... AND THAT WAS NOT A TIME IN THE WORLD FOR CHILDREN. BUT I KNOW YOU, BROTHER. I'VE SEEN YOUR FACE ON WANTED POSTERS. VIEWSCREENS.

BROTHER? YOU MEAN MUD-BROTHER?

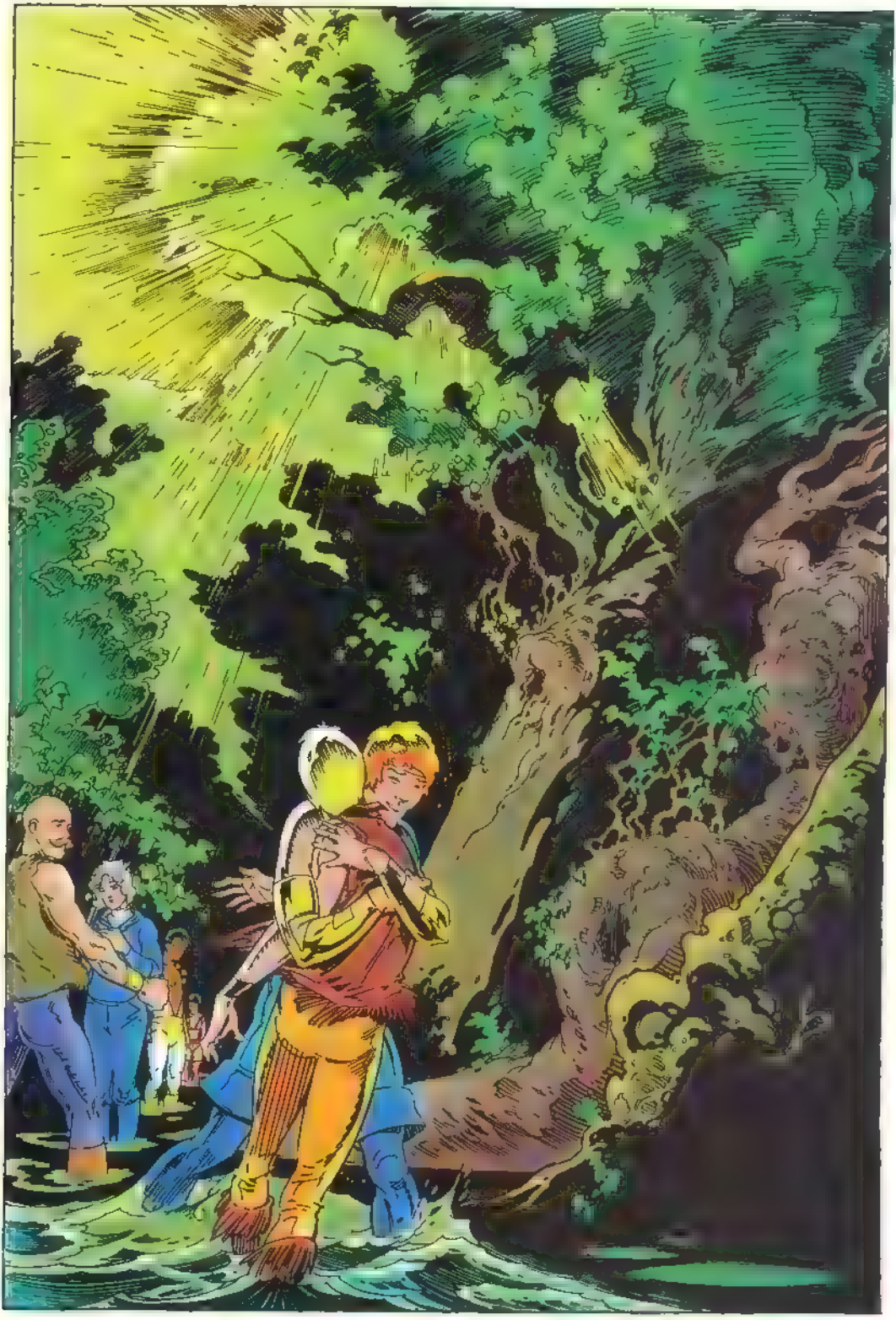
MUD BROTHER? NOTHING SO ELEMENTAL OR SYMBOLIC. IT'S ME, JONATHAN! OR DOESN'T ANYONE CALL YOU ANYTHING BUT KILLRAVEN THESE DAYS?

OLD SKULL CALLS HIM *MR* KILLRAVEN.

I CALL M BIG BOY

JO... JOSHUA?

YES, JONATHAN! IT'S ME, JOSHUA!



BUT HOW IS IT POSSIBLE, JOSHUA? HOW DID YOU FIND US?
I GUESS MY LUCK FINALLY CHANGED. JONATHAN, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND YOU FOR MONTHS, SINCE I BROKE OUT'VE THAT G'LDED TOWER THE MARTIANS HE.D ME IN IN YELLOWSTONE
THERE WERE TIMES I THOUGHT I'D NEVER BREAK OUT'VE THAT HELLHOLE, BUT YOU AND THOSE FRIENDS OF YOURS WERE AN INSPIRATION.
EVERY TIME THE MARTIANS GOT WORD OF WHERE YOU WERE YOU'D THINK THEY WERE ALMOST HUMAN. YOU DIDN'T TRAVEL QUIETLY, BROTHER, SO IT WAS EASY TO KNOW WHERE YOU'D BEEN.
WHILE THEY PUT ME THROUGH THEIR TESTS AND WHATNOT, I'D HEAR TALK ABOUT MY LITTLE BROTHER. THEY KNEW YOU WERE TRYING TO GET TO ME, YOU JUST GOT SO DAMNED LOST!
THEY NEAR WENT INTO A FRENZY WHEN THEY HEARD WHAT YOU GUYS DID IN GEORGIA .. AND I'D THINK TO MYSELF, "GIVE 'EM ONE FOR ME TOO, JONATHAN!" AND YOU SURE AS HELL DID!
BUT YOU'RE HERE NOW. HOW'D YOU MANAGE THAT?
OLD SKULL, HE WAS GONNA ASK THE SAME THING.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM? WHY'S HE TALK LIKE THAT, REFER TO HIMSELF IN THE THIRD PERSON?
WHAT IS HE? RETARDED?
YOU'RE Mr. KILLRAVEN'S BROTHER AND HE'S MISSED YOU AN AWFUL LOT. SO OLD SKULL, HE'S GONNA TRY'N FORGET YOU SAID THAT!
HE'S GONNA TRY REEEAL HARD!
HEEEEY! DON T GET YOUR FEELINGS HURT! I DIDN'T MEAN NOTHING BAD BY IT!
YEH?!
DIDN'T REALIZE A GIANT LIKE YOU'D BE SO SENSITIVE

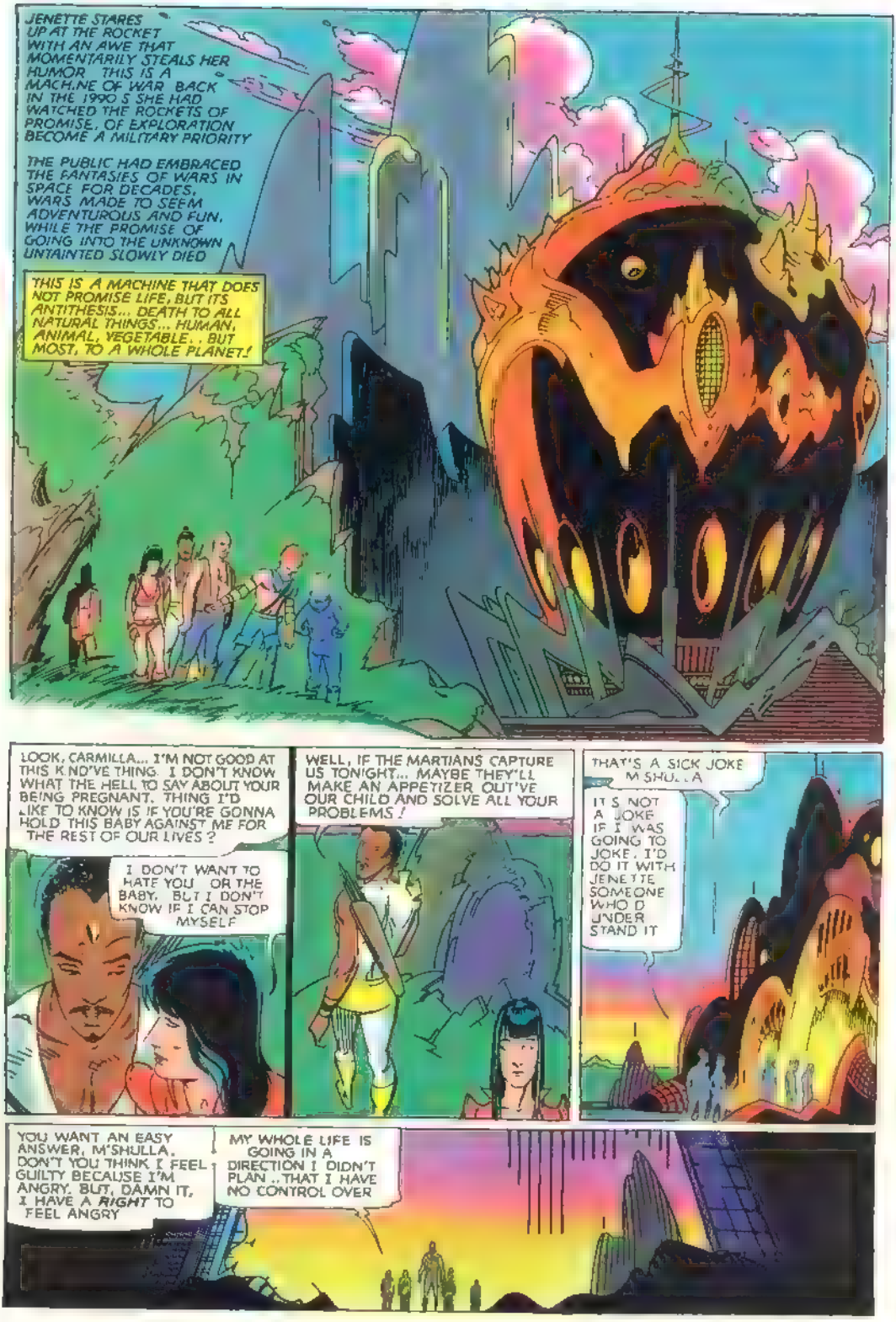
GOD IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU! AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS OF CAPTIVITY THEY WERE GETTING READY TO PUT ME THROUGH SOME NEW PROGRAM OF THEIRS MARTIANS SAID THEY WERE GOING TO TURN ME INTO A PSYCHOTRONIC WEAPON DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THAT MEANT BUT IT SCARED THE SHIT OUT OF ME
ANYHOW WHEN I BROKE OUT I WENT TOWARD WHERE I D HEARD YOU BEEN LAST THE OKEFENOKEE MISSED YOU BY ABOUT A MONTH ACCORDING TO BROTHER AXE FINALLY PICKED UP A BIT OF YOUR TRAIL THIS WAY BUT THAT WOLF COME ALONG I FIGURED I WAS DONE FOR
HE ALMOST BOUGHT IT
YOU LOOK LIKE SOMETHING'S BOTHERING YOU
IT'S THAT DAMN WOLF
SCARE YOU ?
NOT THE WAY YOU THINK. BUT IT SHOULDN'T BE HERE THERE AREN'T ANY WOLVES DOWN THIS FAR, SO WHERE'D IT COME FROM ? AND WHERE'S THE REST OF THE PACK ? I MEAN, THESE CRITTERS DON'T NORM'LLY TRAVEL ALONE
AM I BORING YOU ?
I HAVE A FEW OTHER CONCERNS ..
THAN WOLVES
WELL THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE THAT DON'T MAKE MUCH SENSE HEALTHY WOLVES DON'T UP AND JUMP HUMANS IF THEY'VE GOT A CHOICE. SO WHY'D THIS ONE HAVE ITS HEART SET ON GOBBLIN' UP BIG BOY'S BROTHER ?
HOW DO YOU KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT WOLVES ?
WHERE I WAS RAISED, WOLVES WERE FRIENDLIER'N MOST FOLKS THING IS WHAT YOU LEARN ABOUT WOLVES IS THEY'VE GOT A SENSE OF LOYALTY... FAM'LY COMMITMENT - AN' ACT WITH MORE HONOR THAN MOST FOLKS I'VE SEEN...
LEASTWAYS BEFORE THE MARTIANS COME DOWN AND CHANGED EVERYTHING
NOW WE CAN PRETEND WE WERE BETTER'N WE REALLY WERE

HOW DO WE KNOW YOU'RE REALLY JOSHUA? NO OFFENSE, BUT BEFORE WE WELCOME YOU WITH OPEN ARMS AND LET YOU IN ON OUR PLANS, I'D LIKE TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE.
IT'S THE SAME THING K R'D ASK IF LET'S SAY
MY MOM HORTENSE SUDDENLY POPPED UP OUT VF NOWHERE
HEY! I DON'T BLAME YOU FOR ASKING ONLY WAY YOU GUYS HAVE STAYED ALIVE IS BY BEING CAREFUL
I RESPECT THAT JONATHAN AND I GOT ONE MEMORY IN COMMON.
OUR MOMMA
YOU WERE JUST LITTLE, BUT YOU MUST REMEMBER HIDING WITH MOMMA . WHILE THAT HUMAN RECRUITING FORCE GRABBED KIDS .. KIDS, DAMNIT!... GRABBED THEM AND KILLED PARENTS. AND WHEN THEY FOUND US.. HOW MOMMA.. HOW SHE TRIED TO TO SHIELD US
YES, AND THE BASTARD SHOT HER, JUST LIKE THE OTHERS HER BLOOD WAS ON MY CLOTHES, BUT FOR DAYS THEY WOULDN'T LET ME CHANGE
SORRY IT'S BEEN A RUGGED ..JOURNEY
YOU'LL BE OKAY WE RE TO-GETHER NOW
WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE OUR LITTLE EXPEDITION, BIG BOY?
WE'LL WAIT AN EXTRA DAY OR SO. LET JOSHUA REGAIN HIS STRENGTH AND WHEN WE DO INVADE CAPE KENNEDY AND DESTROY THIS MARTIAN BASE, WE'LL HAVE ONE MORE MEMBER ON OUR SIDE.
THEN WE'LL TAKE THE MARTIANS ON SIDE BY SIDE, huh? I'D LIKE THAT, JONATHAN
SO WOULD I

Chapter Four

LET IT DIE LIKE FOURTH OF JULY

THE SKYLINE AND OCEAN ARE ABLAZE IN BRIGHT ORANGE DEATH THROES. THE CONTOURS OF THE MARTIAN ARCHITECTURE REFLECT AND SEEM TO EMBRACE THE SUN'S DEATH.
OKAY, JENETTE, YOU'RE SURE YOU KNOW THE WAY PAST THE PER-METER'S SENTRIES?
POSITIVE, BIG BOY. I ALSO KNOW WHAT TO DESTROY WHAT WILL MAKE THIS PLACE GO UP LIKE A BONFIRE ON THE 4th OF JULY.
WE COULD DISTRACT THE INTERIOR GUARDS WHILE YOU TAKE CARE OF THAT.
THE DREAM THIS PLACE ONCE WAS ENDED LONG AGO. MAYBE SOMEDAY, THE DREAM'LL COME BACK.
BUT I DON'T THINK IT'LL HAPPEN HERE AGAIN
IT'LL HAVE TO HAPPEN SOME OTHER PLACE.


JENETTE STARES UP AT THE ROCKET WITH AN AWE THAT MOMENTARILY STEALS HER HUMOR. THIS IS A MACHINE OF WAR. BACK IN THE 1990'S SHE HAD WATCHED THE ROCKETS OF PROMISE, OF EXPLORATION BECOME A MILITARY PRIORITY
THE PUBLIC HAD EMBRACED THE FANTASIES OF WARS IN SPACE FOR DECADES. WARS MADE TO SEEM ADVENTUROUS AND FUN, WHILE THE PROMISE OF GOING INTO THE UNKNOWN UNTAINTED SLOWLY DIED
THIS IS A MACHINE THAT DOES NOT PROMISE LIFE, BUT ITS ANTITHESIS... DEATH TO ALL NATURAL THINGS... HUMAN, ANIMAL, VEGETABLE... BUT MOST, TO A WHOLE PLANET!
LOOK, CARMILLA... I'M NOT GOOD AT THIS KIND'VE THING. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL TO SAY ABOUT YOUR BEING PREGNANT. THING I'D LIKE TO KNOW IS IF YOU'RE GONNA HOLD THIS BABY AGAINST ME FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES?
I DON'T WANT TO HATE YOU OR THE BABY. BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN STOP MYSELF
WELL, IF THE MARTIANS CAPTURE US TONIGHT... MAYBE THEY'LL MAKE AN APPETIZER OUT'VE OUR CHILD AND SOLVE ALL YOUR PROBLEMS!
THAT'S A SICK JOKE M'SHULLA
IT'S NOT A JOKE IF I WAS GOING TO JOKE, I'D DO IT WITH JENETTE SOMEONE WHO'D UNDERSTAND IT
YOU WANT AN EASY ANSWER, M'SHULLA. DON'T YOU THINK I FEEL GUILTY BECAUSE I'M ANGRY. BUT, DAMN IT, I HAVE A RIGHT TO FEEL ANGRY
MY WHOLE LIFE IS GOING IN A DIRECTION I DIDN'T PLAN...THAT I HAVE NO CONTROL OVER

GONNA BLOW THIS PLACE SKY-HIGH, huh, JENETTE ?
GONNA TRY THE DREAM OF THIS PLACE DIED A LONG TIME AGO
I M JUST GONNA LAY THE DREAM TO REST
WELL GOOD
..LUCK!
THE MARTIAN COMMANDER WAS IN THE ROOM WITH THE HIGH OVERLORD AND THE KEEPER SAUNDERS--BUT HE WAS ALSO BACK ON MARS WHEN HE WAS ALLOWED TO WEAR BODY-CHEMECH ARMOR HE WOULD WASH IN THE HOT LAVA FLOWS HE LIKED BEING IN THE MIDDLE OF CREAT ON THE F ERY CORE OF IT THE OVERLORD KNEW THE PROJECT REGENESIS COMMANDER WAS USING THE MARTIAN ABILITY TO MENTALLY TRANSP. ACE ONESELF TO ANOTHER TIME IN ONE S PAST THE PRESENT PROJECT DID NOT HOLD THE ENTICEMENT IT DID FOR HIM AND SAUNDERS SAUNDERS WISHES HE HAD A DRINK THIS WAS THE MOMENT OF HIS CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE MARTIANS HE 'S MORE THAN A LITTLE BIT AFRAID AS HE STARTS THE PROCESS IN MOTION
YES SAUNDERS I THINK NOW IS THE RIGHT MOMENT TO BEGIN THE PSYCHOTECTRONIC PROJECT IT SHOULD PROVE ENTERTA NING TO WATCH KILLRAVEN S FACE
JOSHUA WHAT ARE YOU DOING ?!

THE CHANGE IS EXTRAORDINARILY QUIET. THE GRINDING OF BONES SCRAPING AGAINST ONE ANOTHER IS THE LOUDEST SOUND
HIS BLOOD PULSES W TH JACKHAMMER FORCE AS THE VEINS OVER HIS TEMPLE SWELL
HIS MUSCLES DISTEND, AND INTO HIS EYES COMES A GIANT DARKNESS
KILLRAVEN WANTS TO RUN TO HIS BROTHER EMBRACE H M HOLD F RM SO THAT THIS TH.NG THAT IS HAPPENING WHATEVER IT IS WILL STOP BUT HE CANNOT MOVE AND HE KNOWS THAT LOVE WIL NOT BE ENOUGH TO BRING BACK THE SMILING FACE !
KILLRAVEN EXPECTS A SNARL WHEN THE LIPS MOVE, BUT WORDS COME FORTH, AND THE EFFECT IS EVEN MORE UNSETTLING IT IS STILL JOSHUA'S VOICE STILL WITH THE SOUNDS OF SMILE IN THE TONE
YOU SHOULD ALL REMAIN STILL SINCE THERE'S NO LONGER ANY NEED FOR DECEPTION YOU SHOULD ALL DROP YOUR WEAPONS. I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO DO THAT ON MY SAY-SO, BUT TAKE A LOOK ABOUT. YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY MY PACK, AND THEY'LL TEAR YOUR GODDAMNED ARMS OFF AND BEAT YOU WITH THE BLOODY ENDS OF THEM

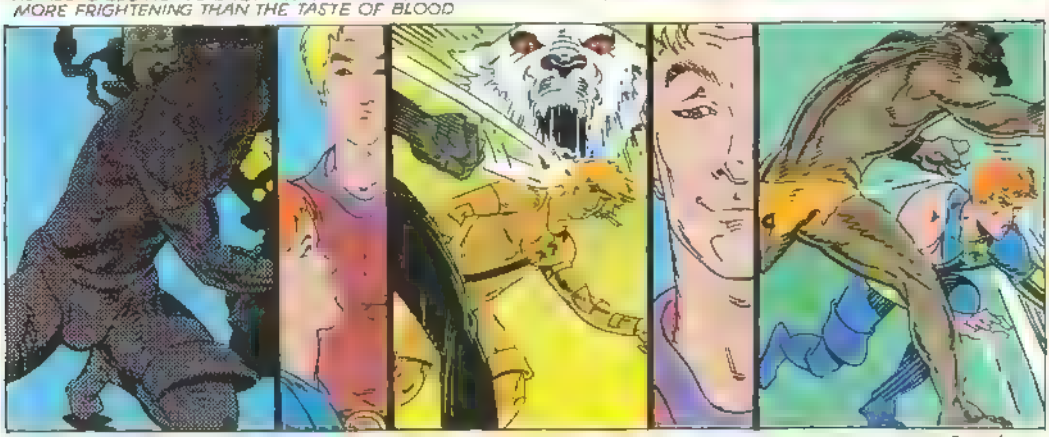
YES, MORE WOLVES, JONATHAN. YOU REMEMBER THE ONE THAT HIT ME IN MID AIR WHEN WE FIRST MET? AND LITTLE BROTHER CAME ON SO BIG AND STRONG. THE WOLF AND I REHEARSED THAT B T FOR DAYS. I FIGURED YOU'D LIKE A NICE DRAMATIC ENTRANCE WORKED, DIDN'T IT?
'COURSE, YOU KILLED IT! I MEAN, THE ANIMALS ARE EXPENDABLE, JONATHAN. IT'S BETTER THEM THAN SOME SOLDIER IN THE SERVICE OF THE MARTIANS.
--BUT STILL, I D W SHED IT HAD THE CHANCE TO GOUGE YOU UP A LITTLE MORE
THAT'S WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOUR FRIEND HERE! WATCH!
ALL THE DISQUIETING QUESTIONS LEAVE HIM. THE DESPAIR THE ANGER EVEN THE TINY SURGE OF PRIDE AND FEAR ABOUT THE BABY IS GONE HE HAS PRACTICED WITH THESE ARROWS FOR FIFTEEN YEARS OF HIS LIFE EVERY DAMN DAY THE ONLY DIFFERENCE NOW IS THAT THE TARGETS ARE ATTACKING
THE THIRD ARROW WILL BE FOR THE LEADER, RIGHT THROUGH HIS LYING THROAT
YET EVEN AS HE STARTS THE ACTION HE SEES KILLRAVEN EMBRACING HIS BROTHER
AND KNOWS HE MIGHT WELL LOSE KILLRAVEN AS WELL AS CARMILLA AND THE BABY!

THE PAIN COMES INSTANTLY TEETH CHEW A CHUNK OF FLESH AND MUSCLE FROM THE BACK OF HIS LEG.
AND, FRIGHTENED HE WONDERS IF HE WILL BE A CRIPPLE FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE
DON'T WORRY, BROTHER I WON'T LET THEM KILL HIM
YET
THE SPOTLIGHT BLINDS BOTH MEN AND ANIMALS KILLRAVEN SEEKS ITS SOURCE THE TERRACE ! WHO ? BUT THEN HE HEARS THE VOICE, FILTERED THROUGH TRANSLATORS, HEARS THE METALLURGIC SNEER OF IT AND HE KNOWS WITHOUT SEEING
WHAT YOU HAVE JUST WITNESSED COMMANDER IS THE HUMBLING OF AN IRRITANT PLUS THE WORKING OF SOMETHING MARVELOUS THE PSYCHOTECTRONIC PROJECT
YOU ASK HOW IT DID THAT TRANSFORMATION? I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND THAT I'VE AIRED YOUR QUESTION COMMANDER
YOU SEE, OUR LITTLE REBELS HERE CAN'T RECEIVE TELEPATHIC THOUGHTS AND I'M SURE KILLRAVEN'S WONDERING HOW HIS DEAR DARLING BROTHER IS ABLE TO BECOME THIS SUPERB FIGHTING MACHINE HE IS MERELY TOO STUNNED TO ASK

I GIVE YOU DEATHRAVEN!
HE IS A RESTRUCTURING OF THE HUMAN FORM FROM FLESH . TO BONE. HE IS A BIOLOGICAL IMPLAUSIBILITY ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH SURGICAL IMPLANTS, CHEMICAL THERAPY. AND PSYCHIC POWER
YOU SEE HOW EFFECTIVE THE PSYCHOTECTRONIC WEAPON IS, KILLRAVEN? OTHER ARMAMENTS MAY MAL FUNCTION, RUN OUT OF ENERGY OR AMMUNITION--
--BUT YOUR BROTHER IS THE WEAPON, AND AS AN ADDED BONUS, HE CAN COMMAND THE CREATURES HE HAS BEEN LINKED WITH.
IT IS A MAGNIFICENT MILITARY ACCOMPLISHMENT, YOU MUST AGREE
THEY FORCED YOU INTO THIS. D ON'T THEY JOSHUA ? THEY TWIST AND CORRUPT AND RUIN EVERYTHING THEY TOUCH YOU CAN FIGHT IT JOSHUA I KNOW HOW YOU MUST HATE WHAT THEY'VE TURNED YOU INTO!
BULLSHIT!
I LOVED IT
I COULDN'T WAIT UNTIL THEY RELEASED THE POWER WITHIN ME!
YOU HAVE A BAD MEMORY, JONATHAN! OR ELSE YOU LIKE TO ROMANTICIZE YOUR FAMILY! JUST TO GIVE YOU THE TRUTH OF HOW IT WAS..
OUR MOMMA WAS A BITCH!
YOU OBVIOUSLY DON'T REMEMBER WHAT A CONNIVING, UGLY WOMAN SHE COULD BE! I GUESS YOU WERE TOO YOUNG
YOU EVEN PUT IT OUT OF YOUR MIND HOW I WAS
I USED TO BEAT THE CRAP OUT VE YOU, JONATHAN YOU DUMB LITTLE SNOT NOSE!
AND I'M GOING TO DO IT AGAIN

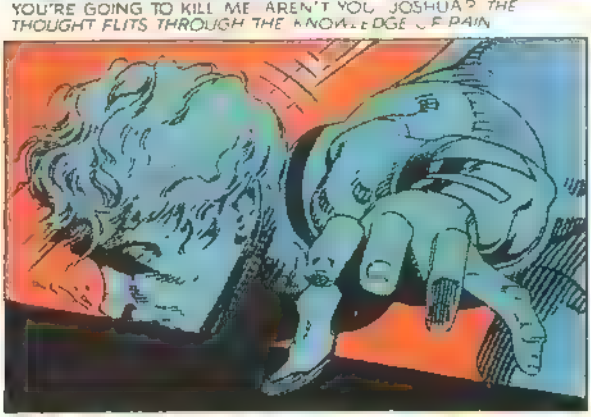
RIGHT NOW!
HIS FIRST IMPULSE IS TO USE HIS SWORD IN A KILLING STROKE, BUT PAST THE UNNERVING GROWL DEEP IN DEATHRAVEN'S THROAT HE HEARS THEIR LAUGHTER THROUGH THE NIGHT
HE HEARS A TOAST TO THEIR FAMILY... TO ITS FUTURE
HE BARELY FEELS THE TORN FLESH, HIS NEW SCARS
OLD SKULL CAN'T WATCH NO MORE OF THIS
HE'S GONNA
NO, OLD FRIEND! THIS IS BETWEEN HIM AND ME! IT'S FAMILY YOU UNDERSTAND?
FAMILY! GODDAMN BUT YOU'RE TOO MUCH JONATHAN!
BLOOD STAINS HIS TEETH SLIDES OVER HIS TONGUE BITTERLY THE TASTE DOES NOT FRIGHTEN HIM

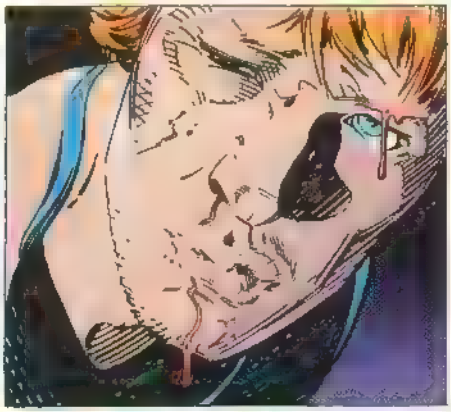
HE KEEPS SEEING HIS BROTHER. THE ONE WITH THE EASY CHARM, WITH THE ASSURING VOICE. AND IT IS MORE FRIGHTENING THAN THE TASTE OF BLOOD.



WHY, JOSHUA? HE WANTS TO ASK. WHY MUST IT BE LIKE THIS? YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME. AREN'T YOU, JOSHUA? THE THOUGHT FLITS THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF PAIN.

IT IS THE ONLY WAY YOU'LL LET IT END!





OLD SKULL, HE'S MET PEOPLE LIKE YOU BEFORE, HE SURELY HAS! THEY DON'T THINK NOTHIN' OF HURTIN' OTHER FOLKS
NO THEY DON'T!
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT OLD SKULL'S ALWAYS FOUND? THOSE KIND OF FOLKS CAN'T TAKE IT AS WELL AS THEY DISH IT OUT!
WELL, YOU'LL NEVER FIND OUT IF THAT HOMILY'S TRUE WHERE I'M CONCERNED
WANTA KNOW WHY?
CAUSE OLD SKULL'S GONNA DIE HE SURELY IS!
SO'S YOU'D BEST PRAY WHILE YOU GOT THE CHANCE
YOU RETARDED
MUSCLEBOUND
USELESS OLD MAN!
KEEP IT QUIET, CARMILLA WE BEEN LUCKY SO FAR THAT WE WERE BEYOND THAT BEAM OF LIGHT
AN' BIG BOY'S BROTHER'S GOT MORE ON HIS MIND THAN US
I TOLD YOU DIDN'T I, OVERSEER? ISN'T HE MAGNIFICENT? WE'LL HAVE AN ARMY JUST LIKE HIM!
DO NOT GIVE YOURSELF TOO MUCH CREDIT, SAUNDERS. IT WAS MARTIAN EXPERTISE THAT MADE THIS POSSIBLE

OLD SKULL! KILLRAVEN TRIES TO SCREAM THE NAME BUT HIS VOICE IS LOST JOSHUA'S GOING TO KILL HIM! HE HAS LOVED THIS TERRIBLY STRONG SURPRISINGLY GENTLE MAN LOVED HIM LIKE SON AND FATHER LOVED HIM MORE THAN A BROTHER
HIS IDENTITY IS RIPPED FROM HIS FLESH, THRUST OUTWARD WITHOUT CONSCIOUS DESIGN
HE INVADES THE MARTIAN COMMANDER LIKE SOME PSYCHIC THIEF TAKING OVER A NEW BRAIN AND LOOKING DOWN ON OLD SKULL SEEING HIS OLD FRIEND'S BLOOD HE KNOWS THE NEXT STEP IN THIS TRANSPOSSESSION HE DOES NOT JUST SEE THROUGH THE MARTIAN COMMANDER'S EYES HE CAN TAKE CONTROL OF ITS FORM!
MOVE ITS BULK!
KILLRAVEN WONDERS IF HE IS ALREADY TOO LATE TO SAVE OLD SKULL

--AS HE MAKES THAT MARTIAN BODY DO THINGS IT HAS NEVER ACCOMPLISHED BEFORE!
HE FEELS THE TENTACLES SLIDE, TIGHTEN, SUCK.. FEELS BLOOD · HIS BROTHER'S BLOOD! BURST THROUGH FLESH, SUCTIONED INTO THE MUCOID BODY HE POSSESSES!

DEATHRAVEN'S EYES GO WIDE AND MARTIAN AND HUMAN EYES LOCK .. AND FOR A MOMENT ..
.. A MOMENT TOO LONG
HE KNOWS T S H S BROTHER
O TEARS AND SUCKS THE
THERE IS NO TAKE FOR FORCES OR APOLOGIES
ONLY FOR BLOOD
.. ONLY FOR DEATH!

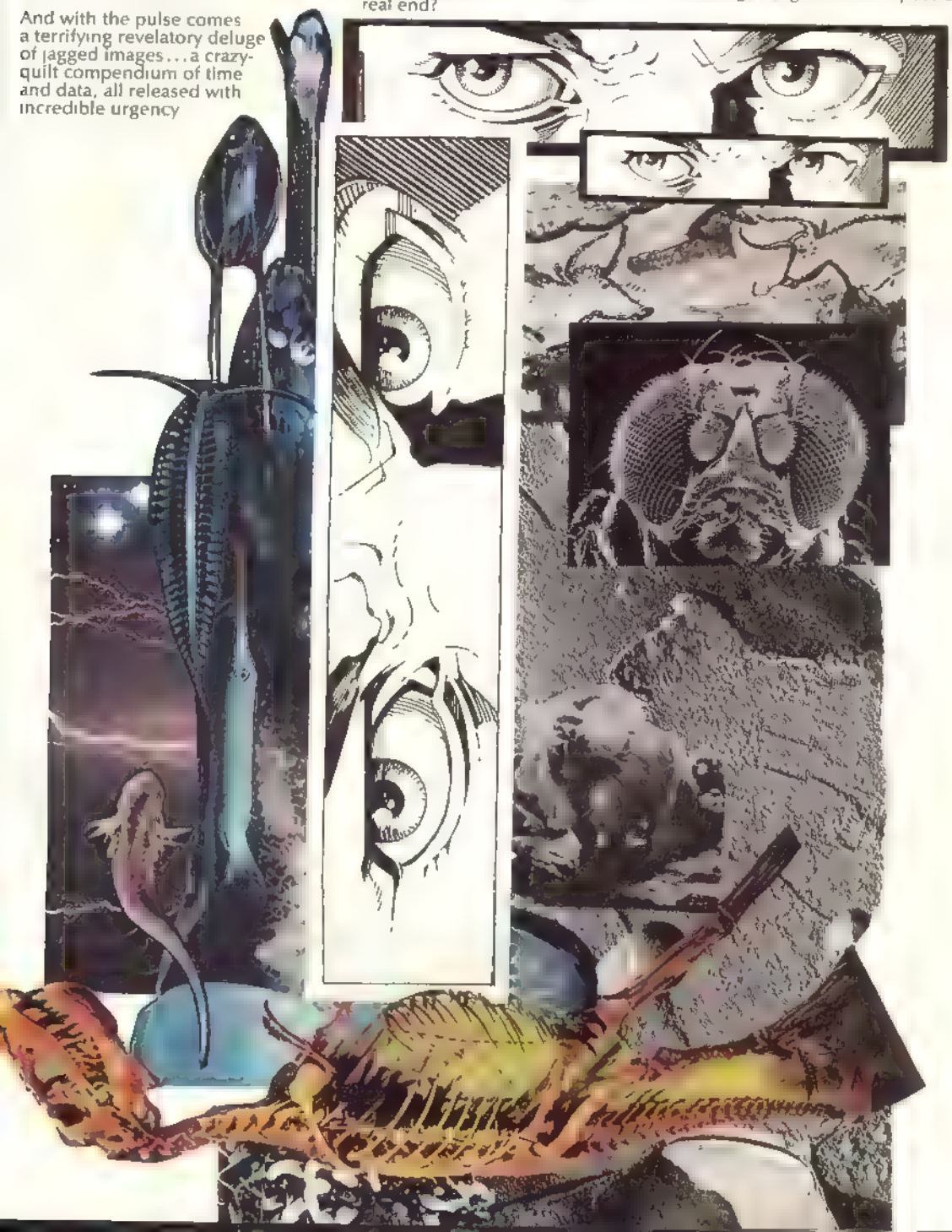
The horror of his brother's death, felt and tasted, releases Killraven back into his own body. He hardly has time to stand before a new sensation overwhelms him. It starts like a pulse in his flesh and mind. A basic, ancestral stirring, pure and undiluted

And with the pulse comes a terrifying revelatory deluge of jagged images . . . a crazy-quilt compendium of time and data, all released with incredible urgency

Entering/absorbing/absorbed/encased/entombed

Eyes entranced mesmerized/viewing history gazing on theory and fact a view from afar/lost in a heartbeat swept by a pulse of blood surging through amniotic fluid/conception/death/life fossilized in rock

Another mind, apart, asks Is this the real beginning? Is this the possible real end?



Sweeping hands of an invisible clock marking time in ideas, inventions and ideals, a giant second hand ticking off centuries of births, origins of families...of wounds and graves...of illnesses and cures

Wars/burning flesh/smouldering metal coffins defiantly shouted marching songs/economic collapses/crumbling power structures/starvation specters.

Lights on the Ginza/neon and chrome promises/spires of Notre Dame piercing the heavens.

Agony in the smoke/smoke gets in your eyes, it stays in your hair/Hit that note, Jack/That pure note/that purest sound.

Like a cheshire cat, a chef smiling from a canned food label/a call to Alice, "Eat me!"

A stoic, alienated clown/running in energetic circles/watching a crack in the universe/watching a blast of air lift a skirt up shapely legs/caught forever in a photo. Splatters of blood smeared on a canvas.ovens of death/emaciated corpses. Dachau/Buchenwald. Auschwitz madman's dreams sane men's nightmares/holocausts genocide

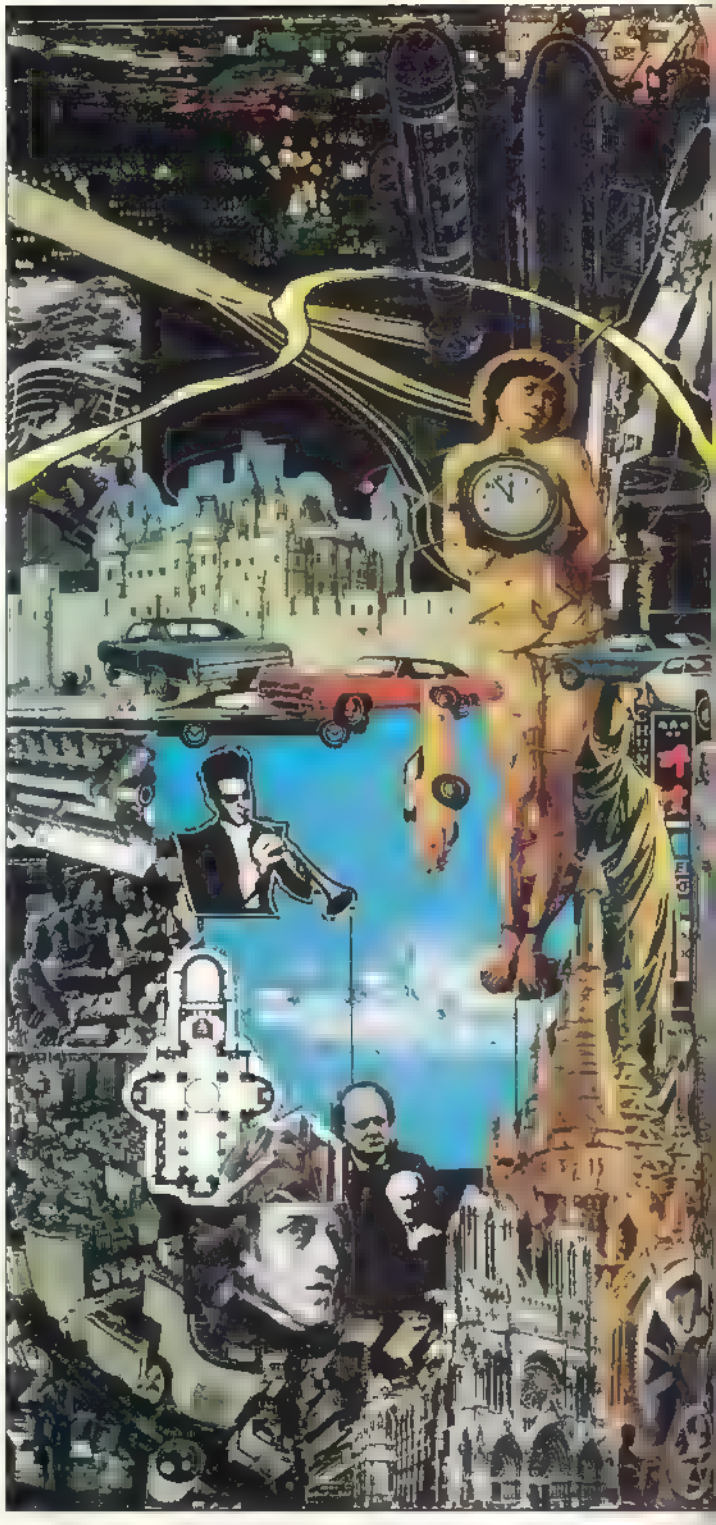
Poverty/dirt/shattered glass/screams of defiance screams of pain/tears dripping like streams of blood/dark impulses unleashed small weapons offering individual death/large weapons offering global death

Options.

A mind, apart, realizes: It is a part of the future. Future and past, *all* pasts, *his* past, *their* pasts. All are linked

A mind apart, informs: It was Whitman who made him this repository of human history. It was Whitman who injected him with fluids that would advance his physical prowess, so that a child might survive the bloody Martian arenas

It was Whitman who implanted Earth's human past, carved it with psycho-electronics into his psyche. It was Whitman who knew from the beginning that Martians would attempt to dismember humanity from its heritage



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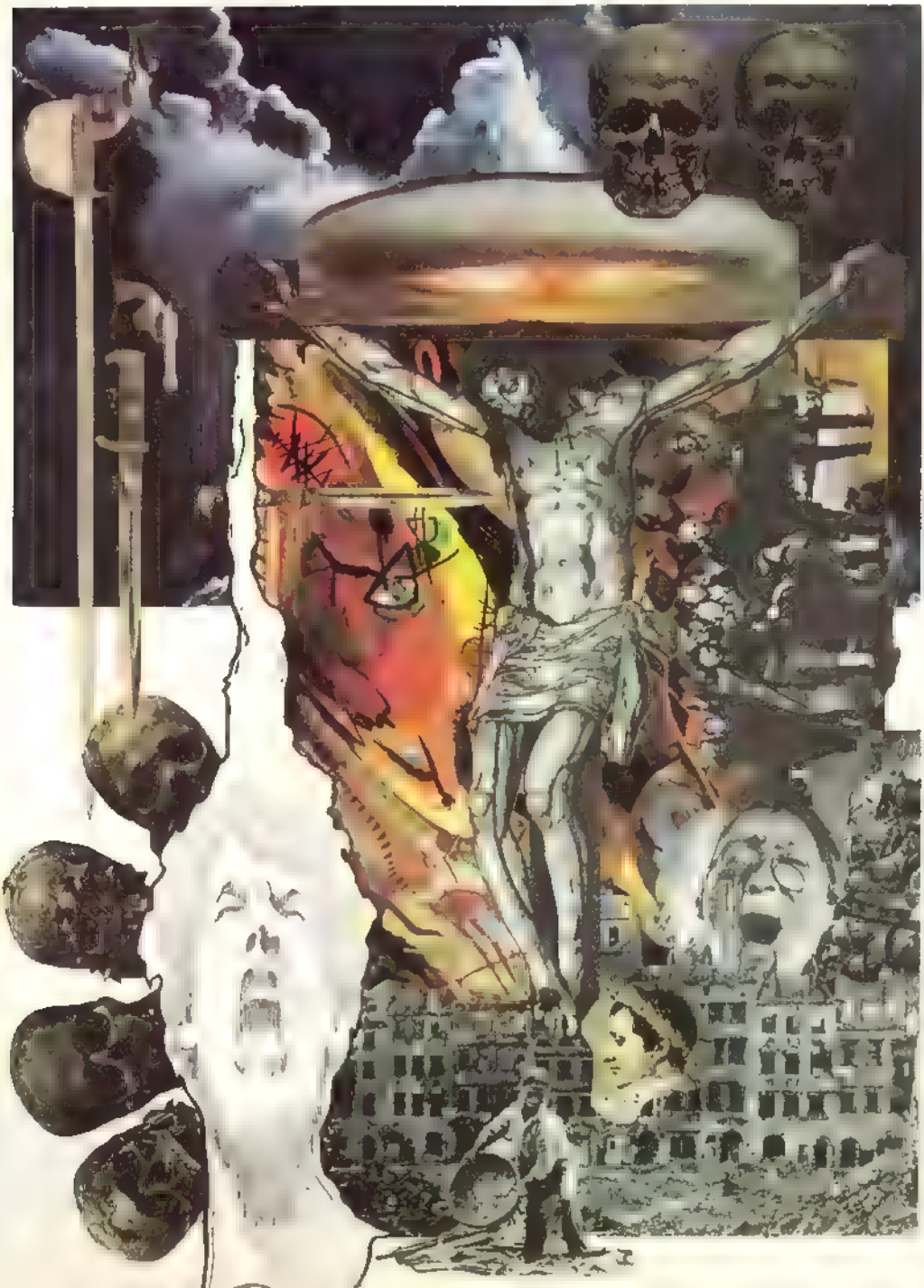
A mind, apart, reveals: It was also Whitman who knew a child could not handle all this responsibility, this burden of mankind's follies and achievements, and also knew that the Martians, if they discovered the potential of the child, would slay him before he was strong enough to defend himself and rally others around him.

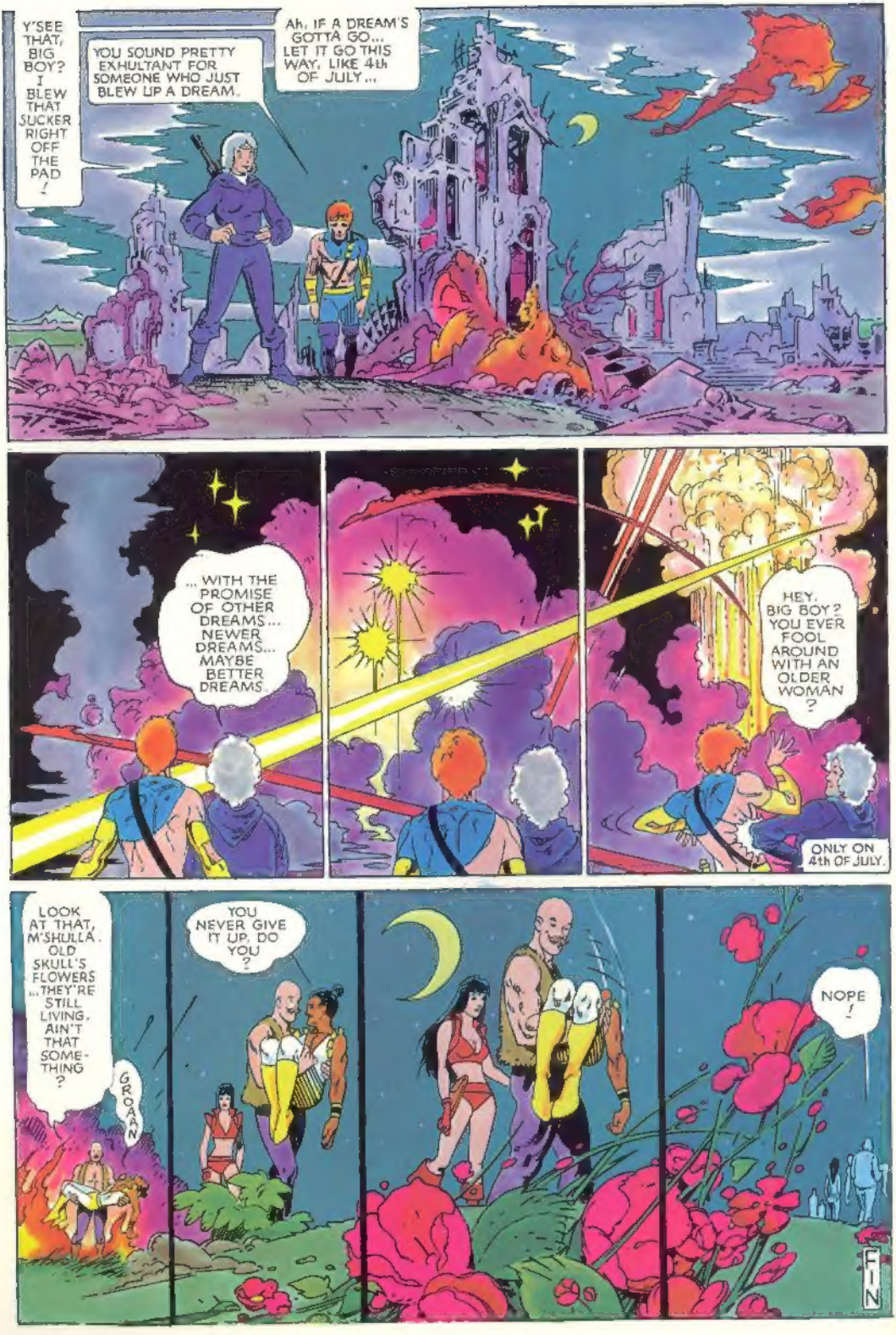
So Whitman locked the madness and genius of men and women into his subconscious, from which it would leak from time to time, until he was psychologically strong enough not only to enter a Martian mind, but to dominate it, to bend its will to his own!



YOU NEVER HAVE LISTENED TO MY COMMANDS VERY MUCH HAVE YOU, OLD TIMER?
OLD SKULL HE ALWAYS LISTENS TO YOU, Mr KILLRAVEN
'CEPTIN WHEN YOU'RE WRONG
MY BROTHER JOSHUA GONE
OLD SKULL THINKS HE WAS NEVER REALLY HERE
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, OLD FRIEND YOU ALWAYS DID HAVE THE GIFT OF CUTTING TO THE HEART OF A MATTER IT WOULD HAVE HURT MUCH MORE IF I'D LOST YOU.
THANK YOU OLD FRIEND FOR ALL THE TIMES YOU'VE STOOD BESIDE ME
FOR ALL
OLD SKULL HE KNOWS IT HURTS
HAVE A GOOD FLIGHT!
WELL I'LL BE A SONOFABITCH! YOU DO HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR!

BETTER HAUL ASS, GENTLEMEN! THE WHOLE GODDAMN SHOW'S GONNA GO SKY-HIGH!
HEAD OUT TOWARD WHERE YOU HAD YOUR FIRST CAMP-SITE!
YOU ARE GOING NOWHERE, KILLRAVEN. YOU HAVE ONLY HAD A BRIEF RESPITE WHILE I TRIED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE.
I HAVE NO NEED OF FURTHER PAUSE... AND YOU HAVE TRULY COME TO THE END OF YOUR DAYS!
THE FLAME GUSHES INTO THE DARK, BURSTING OUTWARD FROM THE HEART OF THE BUILDING!

THE NIGHT LIGHTS UP VIVIDLY. THE SUDDEN BURST OF HEAT REACHES THEM, AS FIRST ONE, THEN ANOTHER, IN A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS, IN TRIP-HAMMER FASHION, DEVOUR AND EXPEL BUILDINGS AND ROCKETS AND LAUNCHING PADS, AND WHATEVER IS WITHIN THEM.


Y'SEE THAT, BIG BOY? I BLEW THAT SUCKER RIGHT OFF THE PAD!
YOU SOUND PRETTY EXHULTANT FOR SOMEONE WHO JUST BLEW UP A DREAM.
Ah, IF A DREAM'S GOTTA GO... LET IT GO THIS WAY, LIKE 4th OF JULY...
... WITH THE PROMISE OF OTHER DREAMS... NEWER DREAMS... MAYBE BETTER DREAMS.
HEY, BIG BOY? YOU EVER FOOL AROUND WITH AN OLDER WOMAN?
ONLY ON 4th OF JULY.
LOOK AT THAT, M'SHULLA. OLD SKULL'S FLOWERS ...THEY'RE STILL LIVING. AIN'T THAT SOMETHING?
GROAAN
YOU NEVER GIVE IT UP, DO YOU?
NOPE!
FIN

FOR THOSE WHO REMEMBER,
THE SAGA ENDS...
FOR THOSE YET TO EXPERIENCE IT,
A NEW WORLD DAWNS.